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*Edited by T. R. Fyvel and George Orwell*

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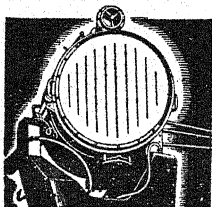
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*Reynolds.*

# THE END OF THE "OLD SCHOOL TIE"

T. C. WORSLEY

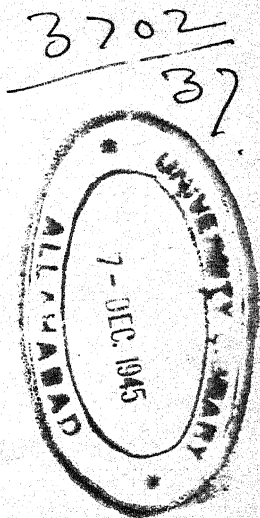
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## FOREWORD

THE Searchlight Books have been planned to deal with the immediate rather than the distant future. Certain problems, however, are bound to arise in an urgent form as soon as the war is over and are likely to be dealt with in some shoddy makeshift way unless they are thought out in detail beforehand. Of these the educational problem is the most important, and T. C. Worsley's book is a preliminary sketch towards its solution.

What he says will not please the defenders of the existing system. Neither will it please the more "advanced" experimentalists or the people who imagine that nothing can ever be achieved in England unless we rip down the whole social structure and build again from the bottom. The subjects he deals with in most detail are the need for some kind of uniform educational system for all children up to the age of eleven, as a basis for genuine democracy, and the special position of the Public Schools. He is not so uncompromisingly hostile to the Public Schools as most people of Left-wing opinions. He recognizes that much of the trouble in the England of the last twenty years has come from the divorce between toughness and intelligence, leaving us on the one hand with an official and military

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class who do their duty according to their lights but whose lights are still those of the pre-1914 world, and on the other hand with an intelligentsia who can see what is happening but lack all training for action. Part of his theme is the importance of not simply attacking the Public Schools, but of trying to incorporate what is good in them in a new system set free from class privilege.

The one thing certain about the British educational system is that if we do not ourselves change it after the war, it will be because Hitler is changing it for us. Indeed it is changing already, thanks to the dispersal of the child population, the impoverishment of the middle classes and the ever-growing need of the age for technicians. It is in our power to decide whether the change shall be made consciously, as part of a movement towards full democracy, or haphazardly, with vested interests of all kinds fighting rearguard actions and holding up the course of history. This is, therefore, a book for those who want to see the notorious "two nations" of England made into one, and with as short a transition stage as possible. It is written for the general public, but educational specialists will find much in it to interest them.

GEORGE ORWELL.

*May 1941.*

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*By the same Author :*

BEHIND THE BATTLE (Hale)

EDUCATION TODAY AND TOMORROW  
*with W. H. Auden (Hogarth)*

BARBARIANS AND PHILISTINES (Hale)

## CHAPTER I

### THE WAR AND EDUCATION

#### EDUCATION?

Now? When the bombs are falling on our cities? When Hitler is preparing his invasion fleets? When the children are scattered to a hundred different districts, and dozens of schools are mere heaps of rubble? Is this the time to be bothering about education?

More than ever *now*. More than ever now is it time to start thinking about the future, more than ever now, just because everything is in a state of flux and chaos. There is at least this to be said for the war. It has overturned old notions and prejudices, old superstitions and outworn beliefs, as effectively as it smashes badly lighted, ill-equipped school buildings. As far as education is concerned, the war has presented us with another chance for the future, if we are ready to take it. But that means preparing, thinking in advance, having our plan of campaign as carefully worked out for the peace as it is for the war.



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And the sort of education we are going to give our children is going to be one of the important factors in rebuilding after the war. Not by any means the only one ; but an important one, just as our past system of education has been an important factor in the drift of this country into war. Again by no means the only factor. For that responsibility there are a great many other claimants. The Treaty of Versailles, capitalism, cocktail-drinking and the love of pleasure, "the system", socialism, atheism—each of these has its claims as the scapegoat, each has its band of devotees to push its claim to be the outstanding cause of the disaster which is upon us.

But the particular and peculiar British system of education cannot escape a share in the responsibility. For the second time in twenty years Britain and the British Empire are plunged into the catastrophe of war ; and the men who led the British people in the period between the two wars have all one thing in common—they have received the same kind of education. The ruling class of England for the last twenty or thirty years has been drawn from the Public Schools. This ruling class does not consist merely of the leading political personalities—Baldwin from Harrow, Chamberlain from Rugby, Halifax from Eton

and so on,—but of the whole of “the top drawer”; of the big business men, the thousands of company-directors, Conservative politicians and upper Civil Servants, the leading Army, Navy and Air Force officers, the Governors and Chief Secretaries of the Colonial Empire, the newspaper proprietors and editors, Harley Street doctors, bishops, K.C.s and even writers and intellectuals. All these people consider themselves Britain’s natural ruling class and they make sure that as many of themselves and their kind as possible get the leading positions. Four out of five of them were educated at the Public Schools, and the Public Schools claim to give a special training in leadership. It is by this claim that they justify their existence and on the strength of it demand continued support.

If the British people has been let down by its leaders, then, this has not been done thoughtlessly; those leaders have been deliberately trained for their job. They were trained to lead, and they have led us up the garden. Not because they were fools or knaves. The betrayal was not deliberate. But the Public School education which they received must bear a heavy share of the responsibility for it, and, with our eyes on the future, it is important to find out what was wrong with it, so



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that we may avoid similar errors for the future.

A general diagnosis is not difficult. The ruling *élite* have been unable to control the course of events during the last two decades, simply because they have not understood it. To take the most obvious example ; no one who *understood* the truly revolutionary and aggressive nature of Fascism and of Nazism could have behaved as our rulers behaved during the last ten years. Britain's Public School rulers did not understand because their gentlemanly education had not equipped them to understand. They were still living in a world which had long since vanished.

" In the age of the Bluebird and the Bristol bomber their thoughts were appropriate to the age of the penny-farthing."

A new world of mechanical power, a new industrial and technical civilisation, found the wealthy rulers of Britain living still in the casual and spacious ease of the day before yesterday.

Consider, for example, the inadequate attempt of the British Army of 1939 to deal with modern warfare. Our General Staff, like the French, was utterly taken off its

guard by Nazi mechanisation. Yet in 1916-18 it was the British who first invented the tank and won the first tank victories. The inventive power is there, as always, in Britain. But at the War Office, between 1919-39, the imagination and the understanding which would have used that power were lacking. Yet the officers of the British Army have been drawn more exclusively from the "leader-training" Public Schools than any other section of the ruling group. This failure of the gentlemanly Public School officers to keep abreast with the rapid changes in society is only a dramatic show-up of something fundamental which runs right through the British ruling group. When Hitler's *Panzer Divisionen* crashed through the rifle and bayonet-equipped British troops in Belgium, and gained the Channel Ports for war on Britain, the Public School system received its reward for being fifty years out of date. This is not to say that Public Schools are wholly useless, or that Public School men are wholly without merit. Everyone knows the Public School virtues, self-control, courage, endurance, loyalty. But unfortunately none of these qualities *by themselves* are of any use against a tank. Conversely, of course, an anti-tank gun which is manned by men who lack these virtues is of little use. As far as the

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Public Schools help to foster these virtues among a minority, that part of the training which does so can be extremely useful to the whole nation. But the course of the last ten years has shown us quite plainly that it is no longer enough.

So much for Britain's leaders.

But what of the great majority of the followers? For in a democracy the masses, that is, the followers, are no less important. The followers acquiesce in the decisions of the leaders; they, too, cannot escape their responsibility. When Britain's leaders were pursuing a policy which was plainly leading to disaster, the mass of the people did not listen to those who warned them; they trusted their Government, their ruling class. What was wrong with their education, that they, too, failed to understand?

The answer again is simple. Between 1919 and 1939, more than seven of every ten English children left school at the age of 14. Stop the next child of 14 you see, talk to it for a moment or two and then ask yourself whether this boy or girl is ready in any way, physically or mentally, to enter the complex adult world of to-day. Yet *less than three in every ten* English children stay at school after 14.

What about the three in every ten who do stay on? Apart from those who are at the Public Schools, the majority of this small group proceed to State Secondary Schools. And the education they receive there is a modified form of Public School education. When the State began to provide Secondary education in 1902, it took over the tradition of education which the Public Schools had established as the pattern to be followed. On the whole it would be fair to say that this intermediate group between Public Schools and the Elementary Schools receives an inferior kind of Public School education. Some of the pupils go to the older universities and become members of the ruling class themselves; and this is the carrot which is held out to the whole mass as an inducement. But, in general, education at the Secondary Schools is worse than at the Public Schools; it contains many of the faults and few of the virtues.

The British system, then, is divided into two separate compartments: private education for the small minority of the well-to-do, and a public system of State, County and Council Schools for the majority. And the great prestige attached to the expensive private system of schools has caused the

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State system to be saddled with their traditions. Those traditions are, in 1941, obsolete. It is quite time to throw them off; and, indeed, dissatisfaction with them is widespread. There is also a great deal of experimental activity in both systems which is trying to find the new path. What is wanted *now* is some kind of a ground plan which will co-ordinate all these educational experiments, so that when the proper time comes we can go forward.

No one person is competent to give such a ground plan. If the following pages stimulate discussion and a will to change among ordinary people, they will have served their purpose.

## CHAPTER II

### WHAT EDUCATION MEANS

THERE are people who will tell you that they don't believe in education at all. We all know the kind of bluff fellow who has done well for himself and who, in a railway carriage, will announce : "I don't believe in all this schooling. I got my own education in life. Worked for my living as a nipper. Far too much mollycoddling nowadays. Takes away their initiative. I left school at eleven, and look at me !"

We may have a less high opinion of him than he has of himself. But there's something in what he says. Schooling, *in the present sense*, that is, memory training and mere book-drill, can go on too long. A matriculation standard Secondary schoolboy at the age of sixteen is too often unskilled in too many practical aspects of modern life. Too many things that he would have learnt from life have been kept from him. This is even more true of a "Public" schoolboy who leaves a monastic boarding-school at



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eighteen. Unless schooling is going to mean something very different from what it means at present, continued education may indeed be a waste of time.

There is a second kind of person who despises education. He has usually come by his own—and the money which made it possible—very easily. After years of effort and pounds of money have been spent on his schooling, he can be found writing to the papers or complaining to his fellow-clubmen that the lower orders don't *need* education and don't *want* it either. He is the brother of the Successful Person who makes speeches on Prize Days assuring his young hearers that he never won any prizes and was always bottom of his form. Yet, look at him now !

The people who least underrate the value of education are the people who haven't had any, and who haven't "got on" either. This is especially noticeable at any time of revolutionary change. At such times simple uneducated people develop a passion like a thirst for education. In fact you can use this test to judge whether a so-called revolutionary political movement is progressive or reactionary. The Nazis when they came to power celebrated by burning their books ; the Spanish illiterates, under the short-

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lived and ill-starred Spanish Republic, demanded reading classes even in the front-line trenches. But those who turn against education very often have a valid reason for doing so. They expected something from it which it didn't give them. They feel they have been sold. And they may be partly right.

What, then, does the average man hope to get out of education? What are the reasons for which the majority value it and try to get as much of it as they can, if not for themselves, at least for their children?

Three chief reasons can be distinguished :

1. Education is valued as the source of power. To control, it is necessary to understand.

2. Education is valued as a means of "getting on".

3. Education is valued as a means of self-improvement.

(1) *Knowledge is power.* The simple may, it is true, put too much faith in knowledge as a source of power. They are likely to overlook the fact that the acquisitive talent and cunning of a big business man, or Hitler's intuitive understanding of human



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weakness, may lead its possessor to power more easily than acquired knowledge. But their fundamental feeling is, all the same, well grounded. To control, it is necessary to understand. Men learn to use electricity or to fly, not by day-dreaming, but by understanding the natural laws involved. The illiterate envies the educated class because he sees that they are on top and he believes that the education they had, and he did not have, has something to do with it. Who knows—if he had only had the right education, he might have got on top instead.

(2) *Education is valued as a means of "getting on"*. In the ordinary way, the clerical worker earns more than the labourer; the high-grade civil servant more even than the skilled mechanic. The best education means security, position, and is the avenue to wealth. In the last hundred and fifty years in England this has been the light in which education in general has been most frequently viewed. True, some correspondence schools and working men's colleges were created because progressive working men realised that their class would never get anywhere until they were capable of understanding. But more frequently adults pursued further education as a means of personal advancement. The unskilled worker wanted

to earn the higher wage of the skilled. The artisan envied the social position and security of the black-coated worker. Above all, only an executive position opened the door on an unlimited prospect of personal advancement ; and for an executive position book-learning—having been to a good school—seemed a necessity.

(3) *Education is valued as a means of self-improvement*, as an end in itself. That is to say, as a means of spiritual rather than material advancement. A working man may set himself to learn Greek in order to have the pleasure of reading in the original works he has enjoyed in translation, or may learn to play the violin because he appreciates music and wishes to gain a more personal contact with the works of composers previously enjoyed on the radio. In the popular mind this is the rarest reason for demanding education. But it has an inverted form which is very important. *You* may not want to improve yourself, but someone else or some body of people may want to "improve" you. So religious societies will teach you the Bible to make you a better Christian. Or in Nazi Germany the Party will force you to read *Mein Kampf* to make you a better Nazi. Or the British State may have you taught Rudyard Kipling or "History" to make you a better citizen.

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In most cases the men in control believe, perhaps even honestly, that it is your good they are thinking of. (You will be wiser not to believe them.)

Usually these three reasons for wanting education exist side by side ; only in exceptional cases do they exist singly. But which of the three is dominant at any one time depends upon the kind of society in which the educational system operates. Thus, Nazi Germany is a State run by a Party. Ordinary German people may desire education for their children or for themselves as a means of "getting on" : or there may even be some Germans left who want knowledge in order to acquire power. But the dominating reason for the existence of education in Germany at the moment—and this will colour the form of the education—is to make the people good Nazis. In all authoritarian States which resemble Nazism that reason takes precedence.

Great Britain, on the other hand, is a capitalist democracy. That is to say that it is politically democratic, but economically leaves each individual free to acquire what money he can and to use it in any way that brings him a profit. So the dominant motive in our education is the motive of personal advancement, of "getting on". To a limited extent the British State is interested

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in producing good citizens ; and one finds in most State schools a small amount of patriotic propaganda, infused through history teaching or the rather vague observance of such occasions as Empire Day. But that is only a very secondary consideration in British State education. The primary motive is to give as good a chance as possible to as many children as possible to "get on".

It is impossible to understand the complicated British educational system unless you understand this basis of it. Hence it must be analysed a little more carefully.

The three grades of our educational system correspond comparatively closely to the three chief social strata of British life. For the mass of the industrial and agricultural working classes you have the Elementary School turning out its pupils at 14. For the intermediate white collar workers, small shopkeepers, etc., the State Secondary School turning out its pupils at 16 ; and for the wealthy and well-to-do, the Public School turning out its pupils at 18. This system is thought of as an ascending ladder of excellence and the "democracy" in it consists in widening the ladder by means of scholarships and grants, so that as many children as possible can reach the topmost rung.

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The topmost rung consists of a place at Oxford or Cambridge, the older Universities, up to which all Secondary education is consciously or unconsciously designed to lead. Rungs quite near the top are degrees from the provincial Universities ; others worth reaching—worth, from the standpoint of security and social position—are certificates from Teachers' Training Colleges or, failing them, matriculation standard. A clever boy, if he is also lucky, can climb from a Public Elementary School through a State Secondary to a scholarship at Oxford or Cambridge, from which he may pass into the higher grades of the Civil Service. Such a career is exceptional ; all the donkeys can't get the few carrots. But it remains true that a small percentage of them can.

Each of the stages of this ascent is marked by a competitive examination. For Elementary School children there is the special place examination at 11½. This decides which one out of every ten children shall go to a Secondary School. At the age of 16 there is the School Certificate examination taken by all children at Secondary Schools. This examination was designed as a test of general knowledge for the purpose of entrance to a University. But all children take it whether they are going to a University



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or not, and it is accepted by prospective employers as a standard of general educational level. Those who stay on after 16 take University Scholarship examinations or the Higher Certificate, on the results of which grants for University or Teachers' Training Colleges are awarded ; and this is followed in due course at the top by the Civil Service examination in which the best of all Secondary School pupils compete.

Each examination marks a stage in "getting on". Since this Civil Service examination is the peak to which the best attain, its idea of what should be taught is reflected backwards down the whole system. *In a sense, all the Elementary School children of 9, 10 and 11 are preparing themselves in a rudimentary way for this examination, since one in ten of them is going to have some chance of taking it.*

Personal material advancement is therefore the dominant motive in the English educational system. Or, to put it another way, English education is more concerned with improving the social status of children than their minds. Unless they are so harried by poverty that they want their children to bring money into the household at once, most working-class parents are at present trying to give their children the chance of climbing out of their class with its insecurity,

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fear of unemployment and old age, into the securer ranks of the white collar workers, who have salaries, pensions and a smaller danger of unemployment.

But the English system is nothing if not anomalous, so that there is a major exception to this proposition that " getting on " is the basis of all education. It is true only of *State education*. The Public School system, on the other hand, is specially designed to make the boys (and girls) who attend it into a particular kind of person. Just as Nazi education is predominantly concerned with making its pupils Nazis, so the Public School system is primarily concerned with making its pupils good Public School men ; this means, in practice, good leaders, or, more strictly, good members of Britain's ruling class. Lately, with the competition from the best State Secondary Schools becoming very fierce, the Public Schools have had to concern themselves very much more with helping their pupils to " get on ", that is, to pass more or less difficult examinations. But it is still true that its particular characteristic lies in having perfected a technique for turning out " leaders ". The State Secondary Schools, on the other hand, have under the influence of the Public Schools paid more attention than they used

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to pay to turning out good citizens—adapting with only moderate success some of the Public School devices for the purpose. But on the whole they have been too busy with their more important business of training their boys and girls for examinations and so helping their pupils to “get on” to make a real success of this.

That our educational system is badly out of date can be judged from the fact that what ought to be the first reason for valuing education, *the realisation that knowledge is power*, hardly enters into the view of the overwhelming majority of people. For each of these reasons corresponds to a different stage of social development. Dictatorship is the crudest and the lowest form of society and education as a “character moulder” is its appropriate mode. Inside a free capitalist democracy, being educated in order to “get on” is the appropriate mode, and since we have not entirely thrown off the autocratic system from which our democracy developed there are remnants of that tyrannical mode of character-building still knocking about our education.

But the first mode of education, that which springs from the realisation that knowledge is power and that in order to control it is



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necessary to understand, is the appropriate mode for that further development of society beyond the present one to which we already ought to have moved.

But at least we *are* moving ; it is agreed that "after the war things have got to be different," that "things will never be the same again." Translate this feeling into something a little more concrete and it would run something like this :

"The economic system has got out of gear, chiefly because it is out of date ; no longer appropriate to the world of to-day, it is wasteful and inefficient. It still brings wealth to a few, but at the cost at the other end of the scale of unemployment and poverty, and, in the last analysis, of war. The haphazard methods of the past will, after this war, have to give way to some method more orderly, efficient and planned."

Every day that passes makes this feeling more vocal. That particular inefficiency of British capitalism, of privately managed British industry, which resulted in our armies facing the Nazi armies grossly under-equipped, our pilots fighting in the air at odds of anything from three to ten against, is something which should not be allowed

to happen again. Indeed, the mere fact that we are in this war only twenty years after the world conflict that was generally thought of as "the war to end wars," argues a political and social inefficiency which ordinary people are not going to tolerate much longer. The era of the past thirty years, it is generally recognised, is over. But where do we move to next?

That depends. We might, unless we are careful, find ourselves moving backwards to some sort of autocratic rule. One can conceive of a mood of despair overtaking the country, a mood of anger in which men will say in effect :

"I can't make head or tail of all this. *Something* is wrong somewhere, but what, God only knows. We must have a strong man with a mind of his own, someone who does know and does understand. Let him get us out of it. If he's strong enough and decided enough, we'll follow what he says."

Such a mood is quite conceivable. Just as the man who hasn't got what he wants from his own education may end by abusing all education, so a people which has not got all it wants from democracy may throw the whole thing overboard and return to the superficially simpler paths of dictatorship.

Against the likelihood of such a decision,

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however, we have the experience of this war itself. We have seen in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy to what the strong man leads his people, even when the word " Peace " is always on his lips. Dictatorships ought to be discredited in this war just because they were overwhelmingly responsible for it. And the alternative, which at present we can only glimpse, is to go forward to a wider kind of democracy, a form of co-operative or even collective society which yet will not be run by party bosses. In this mood ordinary people will say : " Something has gone disgracefully wrong. Somebody's made a mess of it. The fact is that we have been fooled, and fooled by our so-called leaders. That is not going to happen again. We, the ordinary people, have got to set about controlling things ourselves." But when people begin saying that, it will soon become evident that in order to control they must first understand.

There is plenty of evidence to show that already this is happening. The popularity of cheap books, such as *Penguins* and *Pelicans*, which are cheap, yet by no means always easy reading, of a weekly magazine like *Picture Post*, or of the kind of thing that Mr. H. G. Wells has attempted in his *Outlines*, shows that there is a large British adult public to-day which is no longer satis-

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fied to remain in ignorance about the world it lives in. This feeling has got to be translated into our system of education.

Knowledge is, and ought to be, useful. That is the first principle which must be re-established in our schools. Leaders without sufficient or sufficiently relevant knowledge, if they are officers of the Army, encourage cavalry at the expense of tanks; or if they are politicians, use aeroplanes to fly to appease dictators and not to threaten them. By the same token, followers without knowledge acquiesce in such things. No society is safe in the hands of a few men with knowledge while the mass remains ignorant. The common man must grow up with sufficient knowledge to know at least when he is being fooled and why. Only then will it be safe to start training a ruling *élite*.

But when we say that "to control it is necessary to understand," we must not imagine that book learning alone will give that understanding. Some kinds of knowledge can only be gained by experience. Some kinds of ignorance are the direct result of lack of experience. The type of British general who, during the years from 1919 to 1939, encouraged cavalry at the expense of tanks was not only ignorant: he was also very inexperienced. His ex-

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perience of life, we may guess, was restricted to a certain social circle. Public School, R.M.C. Sandhurst, the Officers' Mess. A barren circle into which new ideas only penetrate with the greatest difficulty, where there is a tradition of disliking and despising so-called advanced thinking. A circle where the smell of the vanishing landed gentry still mustily lingers and where riding to hounds is valued as a social accomplishment.

Nor must you expect an understanding of modern democracy and sympathy with its methods from men who have never personally experienced what it means. It is common knowledge that many of our big business men and leading members of "Society", including several members of the present administration, were by no means unsympathetic towards Hitler and his Nazis and Mussolini and his Fascists before the war. This attitude is natural, for in their most formative years at school they only had a experience of an autocratic form of the way of ruling. Public School education is run on the same "leadership" principle as is Nazi Germany. Decisions are made at the top, on one level by the Headmaster, on another by the School Prefect, and those at the bottom must obey without question. No discussion is encouraged and no appeals

allowed. The arbiter in all disputes is force rather than persuasion. The community is prized far above the individual. Possibly this makes the working of these schools more efficient and easier than would any other method. What it fails to do is to prepare its pupils for the kind of life which they ought to be living in a free and democratic State after they leave school.

There are, then, three aspects of the educational problem which we must change if we are to shift the emphasis of our education from "getting on" to understanding our world. These three aspects are : (1) the content of the education, the curriculum ; (2) the problem of discipline and behaviour ; (3) the organisation and administration. The changed attitude might best be expressed by saying that we must heal three "divorces" which we have allowed to creep into our education system as reflection of similar divorces in our social life. That is, we must endeavour :

(1) To translate into the school the proposition that knowledge is useful : and so to heal the divorce between culture and life.

(2) To make the tough liberal-minded and the liberal-minded tough.



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(3) To heal the educational divorce between the classes and so lay the foundations of a common popular culture.

(1) *To heal the divorce between culture and life.*

What is wanted now is—to quote Sir Percy Nunn: "A reinterpretation of the content of our *culture* in terms of the *civilisation* we live in." This civilisation is predominantly urban and industrial, and is the direct product of the discoveries and implications of the natural sciences. Those who claimed to be the cultural leaders of the last fifty years have mostly been incapable of giving the right lead to the mass of the nation because they have not understood the first thing about this industrial, technical civilisation. They have been cultured individuals with a set of historic, traditional and literary values which they have guarded and preserved admirably. What they have not done is to bring that culture into relation with the actual life of most people in this modern world. Three-quarters of what has been happening has passed them by because, quite simply, they were not equipped to understand them. That has far-reaching consequences, much more far-reaching than the mere social isolation of the cultured minority. The rift between culture and

living has gone right through, and those who were qualified to understand the technical or specialist aspects of this civilisation were on the other hand cut off from the preserved values of the intellectuals. In a Christian society, the Church would have exercised the function of holding these two together. But the Church has been impotent. Most of its hierarchy anyhow belong themselves to the intellectual classes, isolated from modern life, and have been fighting a sort of running battle against the Sciences, for fear they should undermine the Church dogma. The first task of education is then to heal this breach. And naturally we must start with our schools and the whole question of the content of our education must be re-examined.

- (2) *To make the tough liberal-minded and the liberal-minded tough.*

By far the strongest and in fact the only living tradition we have in regard to behaviour comes from the Public Schools. But the Public Schools are the one branch of our education system which retains a formerly aristocratic and now authoritarian outlook. It is for us now to retain what we may call the "hardiness" which the Public School training gave, but avoid the defects of that training in "hardiness". The out-



standing defects were a total insensitiveness to unaccustomed values, and a lack of imagination and of flexibility of mind. Within a democracy, flexibility of mind and toleration are essential, not merely as abstract values, but as a practical necessity. For a novel idea, which may in the end prove highly creative, is always shocking and frightening when it is first produced. And toleration, which encourages new ideas to come into circulation, is a practical necessity for a free way of life. A society which is moving forward and expanding must be alive to the value of all experiment, must put up even with a number of seemingly silly new ideas rather than lose the chance of the one creative one. Liberal-mindedness is a practical necessity for a society which is to progress.

- (3) *To give the whole nation a common educational background.*

After having seen the way in which a divided Britain drifted to disaster, we can now see that a greater degree of national unity is an essential. But it is necessary to distinguish between the kind of unity at which the bosses of a Fascist country aim and the unity which a democracy will welcome. The English have been conditioned by centuries of history to reject the

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unity of a flock of sheep, or the unity of a platoon all reacting in the same way at the same time to the sergeant's bark. The kind of unity which is valuable is the kind which is so deep that every kind of surface disagreement is possible. The basis for that is both a common understanding of our national heritage, and also a common experience of it. In its fullest sense, this can only be acquired in childhood. Up to a certain age when different kinds of abilities will need different treatment, the youth of a country should share a common national background in its schools. And even later, when boys and girls of differing kinds of ability disperse in different educational directions, that educational system will best ensure this deeper national unity which keeps in touch with each other children who are following different educational paths.

## CHAPTER III

### CULTURE AND LIFE

*"To heal the divorce between culture and life."*

THERE is an old teacher's tag which runs: "It doesn't matter what you teach 'em, as long as you *make* 'em learn it." A more up-to-date and topsy-turvy version of it is: "It doesn't matter what you teach 'em as long as they are free." Both are nonsense. It matters profoundly—if education is to matter at all—what you teach them.

The common man knows this, and just because half of what his teachers taught him seems to him useless, in three cases out of four he shuts his books for the last time when he leaves school and will very likely never open a serious one again. We must not forget that this is just as true of those who have received the most expensive Public School education as of the rest of the community; often more so. Yet schoolmasters never seem to notice this. If they did, they might begin by asking themselves why this

is so ; and they would discover that it was because they have been either teaching the wrong thing or teaching the right things in the wrong way.

No sensible person really supposes that it is desirable for a boy to leave school in 1941 equipped to understand Æschylus, but not to understand electricity ; to know about the Athenian constitution, but not the English industrial revolution ; to know the date of the accession of Queen Elizabeth, but not the principles of biology. Of course it matters what we are taught ; and it matters that what we are taught has a clear relation to the world we live in. If it hasn't, you may be able to make people learn what you want by frightening them, hurting them or rewarding them, but you won't be able to ensure that they go on learning once pain, fear or prizes are removed. It is not the body of knowledge taught at school which matters in itself ; no one can learn a very great deal before the age of 16. No, one of the best tests of a good education is the number of people who are still interested in things of the mind after their official education has finished.

All an education can hope to do on its formal side is to teach people *how to learn*. Practitioners of what is called Progressive education have brought back from their

experiments the proposition that children *want to learn* ; old-fashioned methods, they say, were bad because they killed this natural curiosity of the child. This is, from common observation, true, without being the whole truth. Every child is naturally curious ; if a child is not there is something wrong with it. Every parent knows the never-ending " Why ? " of the child. After " Why ? " comes the question : " How does it work ? " Educators obviously should base any system on this primary fact.

The child wants to learn. True, but it does not always want to learn the things that adults decide it ought to learn. Yet some of these things may be important and essential ; and the mere fact that a child doesn't want to learn something is no proof that it ought not to be taught this very thing. For the fact of human life is that we have to learn to do things that we don't like doing at times when we often don't feel like doing them. Any education which disregards this entirely, as some of our most " advanced " schools do, is a bad education. But there is no need to go to the other extreme (an extreme to which our native puritanism too easily inclines us), and produce the proposition that the more unpleasant and disagreeable a task is the better it is for the child's soul. Any " subject " ought to be related

to the child's experience and what lies right outside the common experience or imaginative grasp of a child ought not to be a subject. Thus "history" as a subject for children between 2 and somewhere about 14 is obviously absurd, at least while history remains the kind of subject it now is. Related to local monuments, street names, the history of the locality as far as the memory of several generations stretches back, the teaching of history might have some point for the oldest in this group, but it is really a study which can only be begun by maturing minds, who will come to it better without the sort of crude and childish preconceptions which our early history teaching now produces. Or again, it is customary in the Matriculation examination to include a play or two of Shakespeare's as a set book. This practice has probably done more to kill an interest in Shakespeare among the lettered members of the population than anything else. Few children are capable of appreciating Shakespeare, and the exceptions are those who, by the light of their own natural bent, would read him in any case for their own pleasure. Literature-teaching is the supreme example of the stupidity of our present approach by "subjects".

The plain man understands this perfectly.



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Yet otherwise intelligent and experienced educationists defend the system of teaching by subjects and the actual subjects chosen ; and will defend both the system and each separate and sovereign subject vigorously and tenaciously. A radically new approach is going to be very difficult to achieve for reasons which lie embedded deep in the whole history of our school system which the experts don't want disturbed.

Like everything else in the English system, this teaching by " subjects " has grown up by a series of improvisations to meet a particular need at a particular time ; then subsequently it has been justified by a more or less plausible theory. In the late Middle Ages, Latin and Greek grammar were originally the only subjects taught. But they were strictly vocational subjects because they were a necessary equipment for every clerk (i.e. priest). Latin was the universal language, the language of law, the sciences and international communications ; Greek was introduced at the Renaissance so that the clerk could read the Gospels in the original. Only clerks received a formal education and the vocational subjects of Latin and Greek were the only formal education they received. Another section of society, the aristocracy, received, besides, vocational

training in court life and the graces, either from a tutor or by being apprenticed to court life as pages.

By the eighteenth century, Latin had ceased to be the universal language ; it had ceased to be a useful language at all. But Latin and Greek still lingered on as the staple of the educational system, now no longer as vocational subjects, but as ornamental ones. A gentleman knew his classics as naturally as he wore a wig. The polite society of eighteenth-century London, drawing its income from land ownership and living the secure and polished lives of an aristocracy in a stable world, was, as a result of this common basis of classical allusion, as elegant and civilised a society as one could wish to find, while the mass of people received no formal education at all. For the most part the common men in villages and even towns could neither read nor write and didn't even need to. Their education was in the form of apprenticeship to their work, whether it was in a craft like weaving, or in agricultural labour, or in the arts of housework for women. The common people got its education in life.

But by the end of the eighteenth century things had imperceptibly changed. That form of life which seemed to have existed unchanged except in detail for thousands of

years, that form of life which had as its basis agriculture, was in the process of passing away. Meanwhile, the conventional schools, which had inherited the medieval clerical training, the Grammar Schools and Public Schools, had fallen into a very bad way. Indiscipline and brutality were rife in them and the training in Latin and Greek grammar had become a senseless routine. Everyone, even the most diehard lovers of the Classics, had become dissatisfied. Some reform was essential. A few rationalists and scientists like Priestly and Faraday, dissenters for the most part, were dissatisfied with the contemporary education, and under their influence schools were inaugurated which recognised the natural sciences as the source of modern knowledge. These schools, being run by rationalist dissenters, were also, in the spirit of the age of Rousseau, the French Revolution and the Rights of Man, less brutal and authoritarian than the schools run by old pedants on classical lines.

These schools with their up-to-date outlook might have had a big influence on English education, as they *did* have on education in the Dominions. But at this moment a schoolmaster of quite exceptional personality, Dr. Arnold, was elected headmaster of Rugby and saved the old tradition. By tough strong-man methods he set an

example which rescued the discipline of these older Public Schools and gave them a new lease of life. In so doing he also saved the classics. While he introduced a certain number of other "subjects"—History and Modern Languages and Mathematics—and altered the whole atmosphere by his religion and strict moral sense, he conserved, deliberately, Latin and Greek as the formal basis. They remained, they were re-enthroned as the staple diet of English education, at the very moment when the Industrial Revolution was gathering pace, when coal, iron, steel and the railways were changing the face of England. With an almost incredible fertility invention followed invention, discovery discovery, each doing its part to transform the whole way of life, and yet English education continued with the coronation ceremonies of the classics.

Yet, in fact, a change did come over the approach to the classics. For the most part, the pupils of the new Public Schools which were established in the middle of the last century were not, when they left school, intended to become leisured and merely ornamental members of a polite aristocratic society. They were going to be the rulers and administrators of the large and growing British Empire, composed largely of illiterate

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and primitive people. They required a particular training for this particular job ; and what the Public Schools began to supply in the last century was a *vocational training in the elementary arts of government*, with a special eye on the administration of colonial populations. The classics were drawn in for this purpose. At the very top, among the few really intellectual pupils who by the time they left school had learnt enough of the classics to be able to read the Greek and Latin authors easily, the substance of classical literature was used for teaching those arts of government. The Romans had been a great Imperial people. Hence it was held that there were lessons on the art of managing empires to be learnt from them. Plato's two longest and most famous works were also concerned with the arts of government. And on the basis of such classical education, especially as it flowered at Oxford and Cambridge, the Public Schools produced a line of pro-consuls of which Milner and his South African Kindergarten, including such people as Philip Kerr (Lord Lothian) and John Buchan (Lord Tweedsmuir) may be taken as the type.

But it was only to a gifted few that the Latin and Greek classics could have this meaning, and only to the intellectually gifted few among those few. The great

majority of Public School pupils just went on grinding mechanically at Latin and Greek grammar, and received some kind of veneer as it filtered down into other parts of the training.

So far, then, except during the Industrial Revolution, British education had had a vocational basis. As knowledge spread more widely in the nineteenth century, however, a great deal of criticism was directed at the Grammar Schools and Public Schools for their exclusive interest in Latin and Greek, and it now became necessary for the champions of the classics to justify their retention on other grounds as well. The famous theory of Liberal education, which is still to this day the bane of English education, was used to answer these criticisms. This theory of Liberal education was derived from a theory of the ancient Greeks—part of “The Heritage of Greece”. The gentlemen of Athens had argued that it was their job to cultivate their minds and bodies and manage the City State of Athens while slaves and mechanics did the hard and rough work. Convenient enough ; and the argument was revived in the theory of Liberal education. There were certain things not fit for the free gentlemen to do or



to learn. His business was the pursuit of knowledge *as an end in itself*. Merely useful knowledge was, for the very reason that it was *useful*, suspect. The classics were knowledge and therefore valuable in themselves. From this position it was a short step to saying that the classics were more valuable than anything else because they were more useless than anything else. After all, any contemporary knowledge had the possible disadvantage of becoming out of date. To teach any contemporary knowledge might even involve the teacher in controversy. What is true to-day may be untrue to-morrow. Contemporary knowledge also has the bad effect, in the eyes of the British Imperialists, of bringing up contemporary and social arguments ; and controversy must at all costs be kept out of education. Therefore, it was wiser and safer to continue with the classics.

But in fact it became impossible to continue with the classics exclusively. Other subjects simply had to be introduced—Natural Sciences, History, Modern Languages. The claims of each of these to be included in the curriculum became irresistible. So to prevent them from becoming alive and therefore dangerous to those who held a vested interest in traditional English culture, the theory of Liberal education was

re-emphasised. Knowledge must be treated as a thing valuable in itself; contemporary controversy must at all costs be kept out of education.

This theory was extended to cover the approach to each new subject. Science must certainly have a place in the curriculum. Yes, but Science as a Liberal subject. Not just useful Science which would answer the question: "How does it work?" and which would help people to understand the modern world. No, Science must be liberalised, humanised, must become "an intellectual discipline." Instead of learning lists of exceptions to the gender rules of third declension Latin nouns, which they forgot the moment they left school, boys could now be made to learn whole sets of scientific formulæ, which, except for a few who specialised, they would forget just as well. It was equally disciplinary and equally valuable in itself.

Then History was added. Not in order to explain the modern world to boys and girls who needed such explanation, but, in the abstract, as an intellectual discipline. This entailed thousands of facts to memorise—dates and events, which could quite easily have been looked up and found in any reference book. But *that* wouldn't, of course, be disciplinary or valuable in itself.

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Thus *subjects* were born. Subject after subject was introduced into the curriculum. As every harassed senior master can testify, school time-tables became increasingly overloaded. Children, too, became increasingly overloaded with list upon list of facts, most of them useless and all of them unrelated, and the Liberal theory made certain that each new subject as it was introduced became academised and thus killed stone dead. The new tradition of "Liberal" education became almost as firmly fixed as the old tradition of the classics. And in 1902, when Secondary education was extended by the State, it took over entire the tradition which the Public Schools handed to it, Liberal education, the too numerous standardised subjects, academised and dead.

If adults can stupefy themselves with a theory, children cannot. Children have never accepted the Liberal theory. They learn when they see some point in learning. It was the examination system which made them see the point in learning useless things. Thus the Liberal theory came to defeat its own ends. Knowledge that was useless in itself became highly useful for the purpose of getting through an examination, which

helped one to "get on" and earn more money. Meanwhile examination technique itself remained at a very low level; it served chiefly to test the pupils' powers of memorising.

Now each of these stages in British educational development has been logically justified. Arnold was justified by the fact that the English Public School has successfully turned out a race of Imperial administrators, able to rule coloured peoples with rough justice and a mere minimum of force, and probably, within certain not too wide limits, better than any others that have so far been produced. And each examination which was introduced as Secondary education was widened, was justified at the time. The Civil Service Examination, the first of the big Public Examinations, put an end to the jobbery and nepotism which had hitherto dictated the entrances to the Civil Services and produced in the end a Civil Service which is—let us say this to its credit—probably the least corrupt in the world.

History naturally necessitates change. What was good enough for our fathers—however good it or they may have been—is not necessarily of the same relevance to the world of their sons. And the experience of the last thirty years has shown that education has not changed fast enough, nor advanced

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in the proper direction to keep pace with the changing world.

The theory of Liberal education, which divides knowledge into "subjects" and which pickles and ossifies each "subject" that it touches, has had two results :

(1) It has succeeded in producing a dislike of knowledge and a contempt for culture among the majority of those adults who had to submit to it in their childhood and youth. Among a minority which is absurdly small it has produced a kind of culture which is not synthesised with the life of our day. The stream of culture which ought to water the whole nation has been canalised into a back-water where a few of the privileged laze in their punts beneath the parasols.

(2) Neither our national leaders nor the mass of their followers have had the right kind of knowledge nor the right kind of approach to cope at all adequately with the modern world and contemporary problems.

*These two results are linked up together.* The divorce of "culture" from the life of ordinary people springs from the fact that "culture" has come to be thought of as something separate from or opposed to that body of practical knowledge which is appropriate to understanding the modern world. The cultured have tended to despise the scientific ; the scientist in defence or from

pressure of competition has tended to do without traditional culture. This is not a small, unimportant split in our society. For by culture is meant the inherited values of a civilisation, the values which should direct and inspire the whole life of a community. When a national culture in this sense is alive it is felt by a majority of the nation to be a part of its heritage, and it works in that national community like self-raising flour to make the whole light and buoyant. Thus in eighteenth-century England, even though culture seemed to be the perquisite of the aristocratic few, it, in fact, percolated through the whole English people. As a result, nothing made by hand, from the largest cathedral to the commonest household utensil, was really ugly. Cottage chairs, tables, glasses, spoons and forks—so true was it that all of them had a grace and elegance, that even to-day people pay high prices for implements or crockery which were in their time common household ware. As a contrast to that, in 1939, in Oxford, which is the very home and heart of Liberal culture, where every day the professors lecture on the perfection of ancient cultures, on commodity, sweetness and proportion, there has recently been erected a new Bodleian Library, as ugly, derivative and dead a building as has been designed in



England for many years. The learned professors of Oxford may know their stuff about other cultures, but their own culture is dead. So, too, the other arts are to-day confined in their appeal to a tiny majority. A person who appreciates them is termed a highbrow, and to the majority of British citizens the term is a term of contempt.

The arts have no cause to be useless and ineffective ornaments. They *should be* the repositories and the interpreters of our national values. They should infuse those values into the whole of our living, even into those parts of it which seem to be quite unaffected. Poets, Shelley said, were the unacknowledged legislators of the world ; and the nineteenth century accepted that verdict. So, to-day, it is the aliveness of the language used by Winston Churchill ever since his first speech as Prime Minister which has caught and held the imagination of the people. The vigour, the vividness and the vitality of *the art of his oratory* have revealed the same qualities in the man : they are a striking contrast to the evasive, hollow platitudes which politicians have been spouting for the last ten years.

But it is useless, as in their isolation the intellectuals of this country have often done, merely to abuse the mass of the unlettered for their indifference. The fault does not

lie with one or the other group, either with the intellectuals or the masses. The fault lies in our education during the last thirty years. The mass of the British people are to-day unaffected by what should be the culture of their time because this culture has had little if any relation with the life of its time. The Liberal theory that knowledge is valuable in itself has degenerated into a feeling that useful knowledge is to be counted as inferior to useless kinds of knowledge, and culture has come in the popular mind to be associated with these useless kinds of knowledge: so culture itself, if not despised, is generally disregarded.

The last occasion on which the Liberal theory entered into the politics of education was when through it the School Certificate examination was established as a standard. Up to the age of 16, it was felt, formal education ought to be *general*, not specialised, and the conditions of the School Certificate ensured that no one subject should be specialised in at the expense of the four or five others. Unfortunately, the School Certificate was tied to matriculation, the entrance to the Universities, and this did give it an academic bias.

The aim was a general education. But in what sense is knowledge of Latin grammar more *general* than a knowledge of the

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combustion engine? Only in the Liberal sense.

After the war the raising of the school age will give effect to the principle that every child in the country should receive a general education up to the age of 15 or 16. A new interpretation of the term "general" is necessary to meet this situation. The freeing of the School Certificate from all connection with the University is a first essential stage. It would enable the practical subjects which more progressive masters at Senior Schools have managed to work into the curriculum, such as carpentry and metal work and gardening, to take that equal place with the academic subjects which they deserve in the curriculum.

That would be a considerable advance. The practice of our Public Schools and Private Schools is to regard such things as "extras" instead of as an essential part of a general education for life. Yet the handling of tools and the practical understanding of motors and electricity are just as important general subjects to-day as French or Latin.

But we should go even further. It would be good if we could stop thinking about "subjects" and curriculum altogether. And it would be best if we could no longer regard formal education as a process of teaching

whose success can be tested by an examination ; but regard it instead as the teaching of a technique—the *technique of using knowledge*. The field of modern knowledge is so immense that the old-fashioned memory-training methods are hopelessly inadequate to deal with it. The new general education would have as its aim to teach people how to find out, “ to discover in what branch of knowledge any subject is to be found and how then to use it.”

This is not as easy as, perhaps, it sounds. But it is very necessary. It is true that a general education which stops at 16 cannot hope to give more than a kind of blueprint of modern knowledge. But it should not be expected to do less. Such a general education would concentrate on training younger children in the use of our own language, and in the use of their hands, for there lies the first technique required ; in the later stages the physical and social sciences might be the nucleus round which the education would be formed. Not “ science ” as it is taught at present for examinations, but in a wider sense it should be the scientific attitude which we try to give the child. The meaning of evidence, of experiment and deduction, of comparison and classification—these are the intellectual techniques of the world of to-day : these are

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the tools of knowledge. No boy or girl at 16 would be expected to understand the modern world. But with these intellectual tools, he or she would have the basis for achieving that understanding later on. That is all a general education can and should be expected to achieve.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE TOUGH AND THE LIBERAL-MINDED

*"To make the liberal-minded tough and the tough liberal-minded."*

AS well as the Liberal theory, the Public Schools have been mainly responsible for the traditional attitude of English education towards behaviour and discipline. This Public School tradition was created during the last century for a specific purpose—to train an ever-increasing number of future administrators for the purpose of governing a large Colonial Empire. It remains in its broad details unchanged to-day, and it is naturally authoritarian. For you do not acquire, much less hold down, a vast Empire by kid-glove methods. Toughness and the military conception of obedience are essential qualities for the men who have to fill this bill. The Public Schools specialised in producing these qualities, tempered by a rough and ready sense of justice and an intense loyalty to members of this British ruling group. The training was Spartan,



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in enduring hardship and enforcing obedience on others. To this end the Public Schools were remarkably successful ; the large areas marked red on any world map are a standing testimony to that success. So that if *toughness* were *all* that were wanted in the modern world one would naturally look to the Public Schools to supply a pattern for the education of the future.

Toughness is a quality which has certainly been badly underestimated in the inter-war years, as a reaction partly from the last war, partly from the manifest complementary defects to the quality itself. These defects of the Public School type may be described as a certain contempt for intelligence and imagination, and an inflexibility of mind and a narrowness of prejudice which often result in almost complete inability to accept any new idea. These are serious defects. Any national society which is not moribund must continually revitalise itself with experiment and adapt itself to the growth of the international society in which it exists. It is precisely against this that the Public School tradition has militated ; for during the last thirty years nearly all experiments, inventions, adaptations have come from outside the Public School tradition. Even where the rebels and experimenters had themselves

been educated at Public Schools, they had, before they could be truly creative, to free themselves from the Public School tradition. This was particularly true in the arts, and in politics and the social sciences.

It is not difficult to see how this came about. The conditions for which the Public School training was specifically devised hardly survived even into the present century. Britain's social history during the period 1870-1910 is one of a growing liberalism, a widening and deepening of political democracy, and a swift spread of State and social services; the Labour Movement was being formed, and Trade Unions were winning recognition. But the Public Schools stood outside this democratic movement. Instead they became the last centres of reaction. The Public School system remained the preserve of the well-to-do at a time when the aristocratic and the well-to-do in the adult world were sinking their differences (Whig *v.* Tory, Liberal *v.* Conservative) and forming a united front against the common danger to class privilege represented by the ordinary people who were demanding their rights. In the Public Schools the sons of Liberal fathers became Tories in the United Front of the Gentlemen. So that every year the Public Schools sent out into an increasingly democratic England

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a stream of youthful reactionaries to occupy the leading positions and ensure an unending succession of Tories in high places. For the Public Schools still controlled a virtual monopoly of leading positions in the country.

The Public School training has six main elements ; and their force is intensified by the fact that this training begins at the age of 8 at a so-called Preparatory School and continues up to the age of 18 at the Public School proper, both types of school being boarding schools.

The six elements are :

- (a) A training in group loyalty.
- (b) A training by means of competition.
- (c) A training in conformity.
- (d) A training in toughness.
- (e) A training in authoritarian discipline.
- (f) A training that is single-sex.

Let us take them in turn.

### (a) *Loyalty-training.*

Public Schools foster an intense loyalty to a small group, first the team, then the house, then the school ; theoretically the smaller group always leads on to the larger, so that after the school, loyalty naturally progresses to the nation. In practice this does

not occur. The next group after the school to which Public School loyalty attaches itself is the British Public School class. Not the British nation, for Public Schoolboys have little experience of the nation. They are isolated from nine-tenths of the nation, not only from the working class, but also from the lower middle class, from the day of their birth till the day of leaving school. But the loyalty does extend—it extends to the whole group of Public School men.

The British Empire, particularly India and the Colonies, suffered seriously as a result. In the Empire, there was no check to autocracy from the growing English democratic forces. The Public School prefects descended on the subject peoples with a perfectly free hand to exercise their Public School training. Even when the home Government was really trying to be Liberal in its approach to imperial questions, its administrators, mostly stolidly conventional Public School men, were by their training incompetent to carry out the desires of Parliament. Indeed the conditions of Colonial and Imperial rule simply deepened the prejudices which they had brought with them from school. They thought of themselves as “us”—(“He’s one of us”), and of the rest of the community as “them”.

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If this is true in England where the conditions of life throw them inevitably into contact with "*them*" after they leave school, how much more is it true of the conditions of Empire where "*us*" are all the white people, and "*them*" all the coloured. Of course among "*us*" there are also grades, just as an Etonian will always think of himself as socially superior to a Mill Hillian—his education cost twice as much—but to break down the intensive training in group loyalty and stop thinking about "*us*" and "*them*" altogether would require a stronger character than the average person possesses. The typical English official in the Empire was, by his training, almost as much imprisoned in the cell of caste as was the average Hindu.

In short, the Public School training in loyalty which is itself a valuable technique, has turned out to be less valuable in practice than it might have been, as a direct result of the one-class nature of the Public Schools ; a Public Schoolboy is admirably loyal—to other Public School men ; from the rest of the nation he is isolated and his training in exclusiveness itself emphasises the isolation. English education must learn to use this technique of loyalty training but get rid of the disadvantage which goes with it.

(b) *Competition.*

The bustling community life of an English boarding school has many great advantages. It enforces easily and fairly naturally the qualities necessary for living together—self-control, co-operation and the sense of being a member of a community larger than that of the family. But as practised by the Public Schools it is attended by a great disadvantage. The Public School life is run off the batteries of organised competition. It is always competition, never co-operation, which is emphasised *in the practice* of Public School life, though in the school chapel co-operation is accorded some pious tributes. School work is organised by competition; there is a system of form orders, promotions, examinations and prizes, ensuring that all the time every boy is competing against his neighbours. Games, which still hold a dominating position in Public School life, reinforce this attitude. Where toughness is the most highly prized quality, it is naturally the athletes who are rewarded with powers and honours. So that the competition to excel at games is intense. Then again the games themselves are intensely competitive. Sentimental schoolmasters delight in reiterating that team games are co-operative enterprises. To a small extent



that is true. But the purpose of team games is competition. Whereas a school orchestra, which is another form of co-operative enterprise, fulfils its function when it is playing a symphony, a school team is only fulfilling its function when it is competing with another team.

Now competition is a useful means of stimulating enthusiasm, but universal competition is just what vitiates the life of the community to-day. We must learn to work together or perish, nationally and internationally. Yet Britain's Public-School-trained rulers have, during the inter-war years, been conspicuous for their opposition to any international collaboration, such as at Geneva, just as in home politics they have opposed, as a class, State interference with " free, healthy " capitalist competition, without realising that trustification had already cut out " healthy " competition as being wasteful and uneconomic. (Yet the Public School man's opposition to nationalisation was all the same useful since it ensured that the private big trust, instead of the co-operative nation, owned the enterprise.)

(c) *Conformity.*

As in a savage tribe, Public School life is hedged about with innumerable local customs, rites and taboos designed both to

establish a continuity and to keep people "in their places". Many of these customs and taboos are stupid ; some of them are brutal ; most of them are invented by the boys themselves, but tacitly supported by the masters. In so far as they succeed in keeping bumptious, boastful and openly selfish people "in their place" there is probably something to be said for them. But they also act as a tremendous conservatising influence in a bad sense. They make the Public School-boys' community rigid ; they put a premium on a boyhood conformity which extends to adult life. They breed conventionality of behaviour and also of thought. It is these boyhood customs which largely establish the Public School type. They work with immense weight against the exercise of originality and even of average imagination.

(d) *Toughness.*

The community life of the Public School is tough, although much less brutal than it used to be. The toughness is produced largely by games and sports. In themselves excellent, games have become a sort of tyranny at the Public Schools in the last twenty years. Their value is over-emphasised by those who support them, under-emphasised by those who have rebelled against the false values which have collected round

organised games. Other toughening processes are found in some of the school customs, in the unwritten rights which older boys have over younger, in fagging, and in corporal punishment which it is traditionally " done " to submit to while steadfastly refusing to acknowledge any attendant pain.

(e) *Authoritarian.*

The discipline of a Public School, though more romantic, is ultimately military discipline in the old rigid sense. Orders from authority must be obeyed without question. Formal right of appeal may often exist, but if you don't want more trouble you had better not avail yourself of it. Authority is hierarchical, from the headmaster downwards over the masters, from the captain of the school over the boys, each man or boy appointing his own subordinates while each holds his authority from the man above, and is responsible only to him. It may, perhaps, shock many to realise that the Public School prefect system, which gives power to the older boys on these terms, gives nearly all boys a practical training in Fascist methods. At any rate, in a Public School, no attempt at all is made to practice any of the democratic techniques like self-government, election, committees, trade unions.

(f) *Homosexual.*

Co-education is dismissed by your regular Public School man as cissy ; from the term's beginning to end the boys see only their own sex. This is thought to help in the hardening process as well as being thought, quite erroneously, to be morally safer.

Now these six conditions of the Public School community life—that it is authoritarian, conservative, intensely competitive, tough, loyalty-producing and homosexual—would not have worked as well as they have if they did not correspond to some truth in boy nature ; these qualities seem to be common to most boys between the ages of 11 and 15. There is, that is to say, a psychological justification for these conditions in the young adolescent. Common observation reveals that the boy of that age is a particularly gregarious creature. He likes belonging to a gang, is fiercely jealous of his gang's superiority, is amazingly inventive of secret ritual, is often very cruel, and rigidly excludes girls from membership.

The Public Schools may justly claim to have produced a civilising and educative version of this gang life. Thus Rugby football is a good substitute for the gang warfare of the streets for it also requires

self-control and the exercise of sportsmanship. Where the Public Schools have gone wrong is in applying this version both before the age, 11 to 15, to which it is appropriate, and after that age, which is probably more harmful. For it is no less a matter of common observation that the ordinary boy tends to drop out of the gang somewhere round 15 and 16. He becomes more of an individual, wants privacy to develop and finds his first girl. But at a Public School the gang life, which is suitable for young adolescents, continues up to 18, and the typical Public Schoolboy can do none of these things.

More than that, this Public Schoolboy is no longer a mere member of the gang, he is made the gang's leader. He is now responsible for keeping up the gang customs, enforcing the gang discipline, at the very stage where he should be emerging from both. At the time when he should be growing out of the gang stage he is plunged right back into the centre of it.

To this directly must be attributed the fact that so many old Public Schoolboys are of the type which suffers from arrested development. Foreigners constantly remark of the English ruling classes, that many of its members are like overgrown schoolboys. It is true ; and the explanation is to be found in the fact that their development

has been arrested by the Public School system at the crucial age of 16.

Orthodox schoolmasters regard the two last years of Secondary School as the most valuable in a boy's school, because it is then, as a prefect, that the young mind learns the art of managing and ruling those below him. In fact, it is just these years that are most harmful. In a sense the best Public Schools recognise this by giving special privileges of discipline and privacy to their sixth forms. But what they give with one hand they take away with the other. For the sixth-form boy does not, in spite of his privileges, escape from the tribal system ; he is, as we have said, put back into the centre of it. His development is arrested ; and however many " free hours " he may be given at the best Public Schools, even if encouraged by progressive masters to study music or literature, he is still trained not in the exercise of the democratic techniques which he will have to use outside the school, but in government by force. At the crucial age when he is becoming adult, he learns that traditional might is right and that autocratic power is absolute, and this in a democratic world which is trying hard to struggle out of these infantile conceptions.

The practice of other civilised nations seems wiser in this respect. Older boys (the



French *lycées* are an obvious analogy) should be educated in different schools and on a different pattern from those below the " gang age " of 15. This would have fruitful results. It would enable the discoveries of the Public School system to be applied to the age group to which they are appropriate ; these young adolescents can live the kind of life which the Public Schools have perfected — tough, authoritarian, " gangy " ; while in the new schools for the 15-18 age group, boys grounded in the discipline and the self-control necessary for community life, can develop away from the childishness of the gang into responsible adult life.

Such a division would enable the problem of discipline in a democratic education to be tackled properly for the first time. While the orthodox Public School practice has held the field, this has been impossible. You cannot adequately tackle the problem of discipline for boys from 16 to 18 if your rules have also to apply to boys of 13. In a country which calls itself a Democracy and which is fighting a war on behalf of the way of life which that represents, school discipline is generally autocratic, and the various techniques of democratic control are nowhere practised. This is an absurd situation. For democratic techniques are an advance on authoritarian ones, and because they are an

advance, they are more difficult to work ; they require a greater intelligence, a more tolerant spirit, a more ready sense of right and wrong, an appreciation of the balances and shifts of judgment. All this is too complicated for a 13-year-old child, so that where you have the older and the young together it is difficult, if not impossible, to practice the new techniques.

But where you have separate colleges for the older groups these techniques would become of very great importance. You would be able to have (what you already find in Public School life) the older boys responsible for certain administrative jobs, such as running school games, societies and functions ; but you would also be able to have a more complex system of democratic election of officers, representative controlling committees and so on. And it is very important to *practise* these things. For men cannot learn the meaning of representative government out of books. They can only learn it by practising it.

A common complaint against our democratic self-government is that not nearly enough people take an intelligent interest in the way it is worked, either locally or nationally. But how could they? They have usually had no practice or experience in self-government. The Public Schoolboy

—and most State Schools have taken over this tradition—has experienced only the authoritarian way of being appointed and told what to do from above. How is he equipped to understand the ways of a democracy? But imagine a generation which in its school life had experience of what elections were like, had elected its own representatives and been elected as such, had known electoral responsibility on committees dealing with the finance and administration of the school. Such a generation would be equipped to take an intelligent interest in the wider government of the borough council or the city.

But it is as much a mistake to begin these things before the child is capable of working them as it is to continue with authoritarian discipline after the adolescent should have grown out of it. At present the traditional methods have served the younger adolescents up to 15, or even to 16, none too badly—or at least the minority who continue their education thus far. It is in the treatment of the 15-18 age group that we have conspicuously failed. And these are the important years for the future citizen.

The boy between 16 and 18 has to learn to become adult, to be reasonable, to rely on persuasion rather than force, and to be persuaded rather than coerced; to tolerate

other people's idiosyncrasies and to develop his own ; to become an individual and to understand that he can only become one in relation to the community ; to respect, in himself and others, not only toughness, but also intelligence, moral courage and true originality, and to measure the value of his own community not merely by its victories over other communities, but by its possession or lack of these qualities.

If we bear these differences between the 11-15 and the 15-18 age groups in mind, it is not difficult to see the differences in education organisation which will be appropriate to each. The former education of the younger group has a model in the present Public Schools. The school should preferably be boarding schools and they may well be single sex. But the new schools for the older group have no direct model in England, they have got to be created. Hints for their creation will be found among the best of the State Secondary Schools, the sixth forms at schools like Winchester and some of the less extreme of the " progressive schools " like Bryanston, Bedales or Abbotsholme. They should certainly be day schools and certainly would be co-educational ; day schools because they must belong to the local

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community in which they are placed, and co-educational because at this stage boys and girls are turning into adults and have to experience the social controls and the way of the adult world. And managing the relationships between the sexes is an important part of adult life, in which the young should be properly educated.

## CHAPTER V

### A NATIONAL EDUCATION

*A common educational background which will be the foundation for a common national culture.*

ENGLAND consists of two nations. The rich and the poor. Perhaps she always did, but within the last eighty years the division between those two nations has been driven deeper than before in England's history by our educational system, with its two independent systems of expensive private and cheap public education, each reserved for its respective nation.

The division is a created division, created by the establishment of private education for the well-to-do upper class during the period in which the old feudal relationships were dying, but not yet dead. For the feudal relationship between the classes existed powerfully (especially among the landed gentry) up till the middle of the last century. It was a human relationship in which the opposition of interest between the



landlord and his tenants was obscured by personal contacts and softened by human interest ; and it continued in the beginning of the industrial era in the form of a benevolent paternalism, until more and more in our own time the joint stock company de-personalised the relationship between master and man, owner and worker. It was during that transitional period that the system of expensive private education for the children of the well-to-do was established.

The problem of the two sharply divided nations in England is still with us and it is a problem which will have to be settled during and after the war. The common man is not much longer going to tolerate a situation in which the sons of the well-to-do get as if by some mysterious moral right the best education, while their sons have to make do with a very poor second best ; the more so as that particular education carries with it a virtual monopoly of some of the best jobs, such as those of officers in the armed forces, the Civil, Colonial and Diplomatic Services, the best jobs in the City, the Law and the Church, the best-paid headmasterships and so on.

This is so generally recognised now that the fact is hardly disputed. But there remains one line of justification for it—namely, that it is the only answer to the need for army, navy and air force officers.

For as officer-producing machines the Public Schools have a special claim. The argument of those who defend the Public Schools on these grounds runs like this :

*More than ever the country still needs leaders, and the Public Schools provide them. It has already been discovered in this war that the Public School education produces a better kind of officer than any other kind of school. Indeed, experience shows that the men prefer to be officered by Public School men than by officers promoted from the ranks. The Public School men are much more considerate to the men, take more pains to understand them and to help them. And this, because they have behind them an appropriate tradition of service.*

A great deal of this argument is true, or certainly was true of England up to 1939-40. If the Public Schools did not produce good officers—good in the old-fashioned military sense—they would indeed have been white elephants. It is probably true by and large that the rank and file British soldiers do prefer Public School officers. And there are three reasons why the Public Schoolboy makes a better officer even now :

(1) The Public Schools specialise in the kind of discipline which is still regarded—

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rightly or wrongly—as the proper military discipline.

(2) Their products have learnt at their schools and in their homes that they are the salt of the earth, that they will be obeyed and that it is natural for them as leaders to exact obedience from subordinates and especially from the majority of persons of a lower class.

(3) Conversely, a ranker has two difficulties to face. First, that of being accepted in a mess by members of a class with traditions of its own, men who have different habits and outlook and with whom he may have very little in common. Second, that of making his authority sufficiently felt against the possible opposition of a majority of " born " officers to whom authority is given as a natural right. Assertiveness is almost unavoidable in these circumstances. Besides, there are none so snobbish as those who have risen and who are afraid of falling.

These three conditions are there and cannot be argued away, and they are part of a vicious circle. Because all regular officers and a majority of temporary ones are Public Schoolboys who naturally support each other, and because the kind of discipline under which they have been trained is regarded as the appropriate discipline

for military life, Public School training is an advantage for an officer. But, if this is true, it is not an argument for maintaining a separate Public School class with its carefully preserved system of education. It is rather an argument for extending the Public School training as widely as possible so that the nation should have as wide a collection of potential officers to draw upon as possible. But, as we have seen, there are very powerful disadvantages to be urged against this narrow conception of officer-training.

The argument that the success of "the old school tie" officers in England indicates that the Public Schools should be retained in their present form is finally disposed of by the example of our Dominions. Discipline, particularly in such formal things as the saluting of officers, is strikingly laxer in the Canadian, New Zealand and Australian forces than in our own. Yet it has never been suggested that this has impaired their fighting quality. On the contrary, these Dominion troops are commonly regarded as the toughest and best soldiers to be found anywhere. Yet they manage to get along without Public Schools or "old school tie" officers. Indeed, no one can help noticing that there is in the Dominion forces a spirit of independence and forthrightness which is a reflection of their freer social life in peace

time. By comparison the average English private stands out, if not as more subservient, at least as far less independent. Whether this independence is an advantage in a soldier — whether the Australians, who fought with such splendid discipline in Lybia and Greece, are as good as if not better soldiers than the Guards—must be left to military theoreticians to decide. But that in peace time the freer and more independent democratic spirit of the Dominions is an invaluable quality and one which is less and less evident in the British is undoubted.

It is worth dwelling on this difference, partly originating in our system of education. It is worth considering whether a stage has not been reached in the social growth of the British nation which may be compared to a certain stage in the growth of a child. Every mother knows the awkward stage when a young boy or girl is beginning to grow away from her, to take decisions on his or her own. At this stage the mother is gratified to find that her child sometimes comes back to have its difficulties resolved ; if she is unwise, she will imagine that the child is still dependent on her after all. It is not so. Once it has tasted the pleasure of independence, even if it bungles its independence, it will not be satisfied until in the end it is quite free. It is a bad mother who does not know this, and

does not help the child to grow away from her, a bad mother who encourages every sign of dependence, and at each failure takes back responsibility herself with an "I told you so".

There is an analogy here with our national social development. The common British soldier may still prefer to be officered by the gentleman of military education. But he *ought* to want to be an officer himself. Like a bad mother the Public School classes make it thoroughly uncomfortable for a ranker, and so prove that they are still indispensable. Like a bad mother the English ruling class allows the Labour movement independent (or rather semi-independent) power, but behind the scenes it is working quietly to get its child into the mess from which it will run back to mother, as it did in 1931.

It is always a struggle for the child to gain its independence of the mother. Often it is a violent struggle, or a struggle which can only be ended by some such violent action as leaving home one evening, never to return. But such abrupt endings are only necessary if the mother has tied her apron-strings too tightly. Whether the Public School classes will relinquish their vanishing monopoly-hold gracefully and give every help to the new, more classless, more co-operative British society which is coming, is an open question.



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Or will the common man have to sever his connection, cut that umbilical cord with a final and violent decision?

The answer to that is largely political. But in either case education will have an important part to play. If the transition is to be moderately peaceable, the gap which exists at present between the two nations will have to be healed, and healed at the one point that it is easiest to heal it—at the schools. Children don't notice differences of class habit unless their elders teach them to do so.

## CHAPTER VI

### FALSE REFORMS

THE big division which our educational system drives through the English people is by now commonly accepted and commonly deplored ; nearly all the more progressive Public School headmasters, though by no means all Public School Governors, recognise the necessity for some reform which will democratise the Public Schools. In its present acute form this educational division between the Public Schools and State Schools is not likely to outlast the war very long. Two ways of healing the division are generally put forward :

(1) Infiltration of Elementary School children into the Public Schools.

(2) Youth movements.

(1) *Infiltration by Elementary School children.*

The assumption of most of those who put forward this remedy is that the Public Schools are excellent in themselves, and that

the only objection to them is that they are the preserves of the well-to-do ; whereas they should be open to talented boys and girls from all classes. The only qualification for a Public School education should be merit. The candidates should be selected from the whole of the nation's children, and those who are found to deserve it should be sent to the Public Schools, at the State cost if necessary. Thus the Public Schools would become really *public* again.

To this solution there are two objections :

(a) The mere experience of the last thirty years shows that the Public School education *as it is at present* is inadequate to its function.

(b) Far from healing the division which it sets out to heal, this solution simply preserves the division (which may, perhaps, be the intention of those who suggest it), while shuffling different sets of people into the different compartments.

(a) Reforming the Public Schools by bringing their curriculum and so on up to date is not in itself a sufficient answer to the criticisms against them. At the centre of the problem of the Public School system as an educational technique lies the fact that it applies a right method to the wrong age. If the system remained unchanged with merely

a different school population, exactly the same objections would stand against it as stand against it at present. It would produce the same kind of mental sclerosis in the new set of pupils that it did in the old.

(b) The object of any educational reform should be to heal the deep class division in the English people. But any system which skims off the cream of the year's boys and isolates them in boarding schools away from the rest of the community during their school life, is bound to create anew the division it ostensibly sets out to heal. And, in fact, it is usually suggested that in the early stages of this process of filling the Public Schools with Elementary Schoolboys, only a small percentage of free placers will be taken. The Public Schools will stand out for as few as they can, say 10 per cent. And this 10 per cent. of free placers will not, we may be sure, act as a leaven to the whole lump. On the contrary, they will be indoctrinated with the habits and the manners and the mental and psychological pattern of the "born" Public Schoolboys among whom they find themselves. That is the very reason why the Public Schools will try to keep the numbers of Elementary School entrants as small as possible. But even if they don't succeed, if the 10 per cent. were

to become 25 or even 50, and would theoretically go on to reach 80 per cent., it will still be true that one smaller part of the nation will be isolated from the greater part during childhood. Moreover, these Public Schools are bound to remain superior *in social status* to any other form of education which is offered, so that education for all the nation's children in the years before entrance will have been ruined by having to prepare them for the selection board ; for naturally all must be trained to compete for the chance to get into these schools. The chief result of infiltration into the Public Schools will be to revive in a worse form the evil of *education for status*, which even at present vitiates all education in England, and to maintain that artificial isolation of one class which it is the very purpose of the reform to remove.

The real problem of a national educational system as an organisation must surely be to keep together as far as possible and as long as possible children who are going to do very different things in after life. At present the British education system fails to do this, first, because of the existence of private education which makes the largest and most obvious division, and secondly, because we strain off potential brain-workers, the future white-collar workers, at the age of 11 and

educate them apart from the larger mass of potential manual workers. Yet it is true that the general education for both could easily be, and should be, the same in kind at least up to the age of 15, the earliest age at which any kind of specialisation should begin.

(2) *Youth Movements.*

Youth movements are the fashionable method of cutting across class differences. And the idea of a Youth movement is fashionable in England at the moment, although one would have thought that the experience of the last few years would have discredited such ideas.

A Youth movement, like propaganda, is a form of education, though a debased form. Its advantage over more orthodox forms of education is that, as a study of the Hitler Youth movement shows, it can impose a certain set of ideas and its own kind of unity in a remarkably short time. It is a superficial short cut to bridging at least class differences, though we have yet to see how effective it is in the long run. But at least at the beginning a Youth movement on a national scale can succeed in bringing the classes together more cheaply and easily than any educational organisation could do.

It does this by playing on the same psycho-



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logical truth about young adolescents as the Public School system does ; indeed, as the Nazis have so confessed, it has learned a great deal from the Public Schools. It appeals to the gangsterdom in small boys as the Public School system does ; it uses their competitive spirit and their fierce gang loyalties. In addition to that it gives the extra bit of glamour by providing a uniform and a band.

The revealing thing about all Youth movements is their romanticism. The basis of the Boy Scout movement was "path-finding" at a time when path-finding was already obsolete. The German Youth movements, the famous earlier *Wandervoegel*, on which Hitler's was founded, were all back-to-nature movements in origin, romantic attempts to recover a past, to re-establish an age which had ended. So, too, our native Youth movement, which exists only in embryo, is founded on romantic assumptions about Nature. But the business of our educational system to-day is to help in the construction of a dignified urban civilisation, not to avoid the town by playing at being in a different kind of age. The reality behind Youth movements, of course, is pre-military training. In that case it is much better to say so. An air cadet scheme which will

train directly for flying may be a military necessity ; it is anyhow quite honest. But a Youth movement like that of the Nazis, which bases itself on javelin throwing as a concealed substitute for throwing hand-grenades, is phoney. If it is necessary to teach the young to use hand-grenades, as it evidently is, let them use hand-grenades. An education in 1941 must be an education through the means which 1941 supplies for the kind of life of 1941. In 1941 a motor cycle is ultimately a better educational instrument than a horse, a revolver than a scout-pole, air navigation rather than path-finding.

But javelin or hand-grenade, hiking or motor-cycling, no Youth movement is a substitute for true education, any more than a piece of chocolate is a "meal in itself" as the advertisements tell us. Chocolate is certainly more glamorous than porridge, and uniforms, scouting and throwing javelins are more glamorous than serious education. But they are not the same thing.

There are, in fact, three aims which any Youth Movement conceals :

(1) A method of putting across military training without appearing to do so.

(2) A way of utilising that adolescent gang spirit for the whole nation without

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having to provide schools to do it in, and of disguising instead of healing the present class division in education.

(3) A way of fostering the nation's health—again usually for military reasons.

As to (1)—whether or not military training will be a necessity after the war depends on the way things go. If, as seems likely, it will be, then cadet corps are the quickest and easiest way of doing it.

As to (2)—this is a way of obscuring the division, not of curing it. Judging from the propaganda that has been put about by the promoters of the County Badge Scheme (our local Youth movement) they envisage the Public Schools more or less as they are, but would make it compulsory for Public Schoolboys to act as the leaders in the Youth movement during part of their holidays. That would no doubt be very good for the Public Schoolboys. But it would be less good for the dependent "other classes". What it would in any case not do is to heal the class division.

(3) To raise the standard of health of the school population is certainly very important. Fresh air and sunlight are necessary ingredients in that health. But they are not substitutes for the efficient medical service which the State schools have developed in elementary form, but which should be

much increased. Equally, good town-planning which the destruction wrought by the bombs may render easier to achieve, should do away with the worst conditions of back-street life. Educational colonies in rural school camps are just as efficient a method of getting children into the country as a Youth movement. On the other hand, sports clubs, cycling clubs and so on, as *an addition* to a proper educational system, are obviously invaluable.

All the same, educationists cannot afford to neglect these important aspects of the adolescent's make-up, his ganginess and love of adventure. Unless the educational system finds in itself some means of satisfying the adolescent need, the decision will go by default to Youth movements. But it need not do so.

## CHAPTER VII

### *SKETCH FOR A NEW SYSTEM*

NEITHER of these methods, then, can be really successful in healing the division between the classes. Infiltration into the Public Schools will only preserve a slightly changed kind of division. A Youth movement is only a way of obscuring the fissure. The only remedy is a proper and thorough-going national system of education. To the average Englishman, any kind of national planning is repugnant. We have always muddled through, he imagines, and it is supposed that we always will. If this mood has recently been changing as we have become more and more conscious of where muddling through has led us, considerable prejudice against planning still persists. The British educational system has never been planned. It has grown up by a series of improvisations to meet immediate needs ; and it is now in such a thorough muddle that a mere explanation of the way it works would take many pages. This muddle is not merely

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accepted, it is even defended. It is the muddle, the defenders claim, which gives our system its remarkable *variety*. Other nations might have more order in their systems, but the order is gained at the price of uniformity, and look where that has led these nations ! Once you have a national system, all the benefits of variety go. Red tape and bureaucracy will iron out the creases and all the character from our education system at the same time.

The answer to such people is that variety in education is certainly admirable and indeed it must be retained ; but it is important to get it *in the right place* and *of the right kind*. Our present variety provides, not different kinds of education for different kinds of ability, but different grades of schools for children from different income levels, although all the schools purvey much the same academic and non-manual education. The abolition of private education would do a lot to put an end to this. But the fault runs even deeper than this. For even in the State system secondary education is still to too large an extent awarded not on the basis of the *ability* of the prospective pupil, but on the basis of ability of the parent—to find the money.

This is not a desirable kind of variety. What we want is the kind of variety which



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provides a suitable education for the various kinds of ability, remembering that academic ability is only one kind of ability, and that in a democracy the education of the majority is just as, if not more, important than the education of the advanced groups. Europe has been thinking far too much lately in terms of educating the leaders. It is time we turned seriously to the education of the followers. Intelligent followers are as important as intelligent leaders, except in a slave State or a Fascist dictatorship.

This variety corresponding to different kinds of ability must come *at the right place*. The groundwork of education for the citizen of a modern State is the same whether the citizen is to be a prime minister or a dock labourer. That groundwork consists in the elementary techniques of reading and writing, of figuring and handling simple instruments, and in being taught the elements of social behaviour. There is not much room for variety here, no more than is inevitable in the fact that each thirty children will be under different teachers.

At present, the first variety is introduced into our national education too early—at the age of 11 when the potential brain-workers are separated off from the potential hand-workers. Yet 11 is too early an age to make a break on the basis of differing

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abilities. Children are so uneven in their development that to make a final decision at this age is extremely unfair ; and in the present system there is very little possibility of transfer once the choice has been made.

True, the obvious first kind of differentiation of ability that can be made is the very broad one whether a child is going to be more apt with its hands or its brains. But even this broad generalisation cannot be made with any certainty much before 13. And, in any case, there ought to be plenty of latitude for mistakes to be corrected.

Moreover, to meet this broad line of demarcation only the broadest kind of difference in school routine need be necessary, no more than a shift of balance between time spent in the workshops and the classrooms. By the age of 13, however, one can expect the two groups to have emerged more clearly ; and attention can then be given to making still more specialised distinctions between abilities, so that at the age of 15½, when a general education is completed, the teachers will know with greater accuracy where the different abilities of different pupils lie.

This age is the first point at which it is necessary to introduce a marked variety of education to meet the different abilities

which have revealed themselves in the intervening period.

Under the present system the education of some seven children out of ten has already stopped a year and a half before this appropriate dividing point. But at last it has been officially recognised that this is inadequate and a law is already on the Statute Book raising the school-leaving age to 15. And further, the last important educational report (the Spens Report) has recommended that the age be still further raised to 16, and with the added impetus of the war it is certain that after the war the Spens Report will represent official policy. The principle will be accepted, then, that every child in this country should receive a general education up to the age of 16.

It is after 16, after the general education has been finished, that it is essential to have the educational variety. Again there is on the Statute Book an Act which shows us the way that our system will supply it. The Fisher Act, which was passed after the last war, was an extraordinarily progressive measure. One of its provisions was that a form of education should continue to be given to all young people up to the age of 18. This form of education in effect makes all employment for young people a kind of apprenticeship, while all employers have to

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allow their young employees to continue their education during normal working hours. This act was far too advanced for the times and was never put into operation. But it supplies the right principle. And it is Day Continuation Schools, or rather colleges of this type, which we would advocate for all.

The Day Continuation School scheme failed, partly through the selfishness of employers, but an additional reason may well have been that the scheme took too academic a view of what the function of "Continued Education" should be. The theory of Liberal education laid its dead hand on this scheme as well. But schooling in the ordinary sense should be a very small part of the education at Day Continuation Schools. If it were decided to give one course of economic and political history which traced the growth of the modern industrial State rather on the line of Lewis Mumford's books, that would be as much formal education as would be required. For the rest the new Continued Education for adolescents should be on much freer lines. Attendance should be compulsory, but the latitude of choice of study or occupation should be *infinitely wide*. The colleges for adolescents—for they would be colleges much more than schools—should be fully

equipped with first-class workshops of all kinds ; with well-stocked libraries, with laboratories, with music and art rooms, playing-fields, etc. But above all, *here* there should be the widest possible variety of study, so that boys and girls of different aptitudes could each find their appropriate outlet.

These local colleges would be the equivalent of popular junior universities whose main function it would be to manage the difficult transition from the child to the young adult. They would have to be generous in provision of facilities and flexible in organisation. Realising that self-discipline is the only discipline that matters, they would rely on stimulating rather than coercing interest ; and it would be in them that every child would gain experience of the working of democratic techniques, for they would be to a large extent self-governing.

A second function of these colleges would be to co-ordinate the social activities of their district such things as Boys' Clubs, Y.M.C.A., etc., which at present function rather inadequately either for lack of funds, space or equipment. Here, at these colleges, there should be dances, plays, orchestras, debating societies, literary societies, all the co-operative activities which take place in the top part of a good school ; and here,

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too, there would be opportunities and equipment for every kind of game and sport.

The third function of these colleges would be that of full-time school for those who were still continuing a specialised education. The working majority would use the colleges only for eight or ten hours a week in school hours (though they would use them much more in out-of-work hours), but the "specialisers" would be permanently there. But there would not be, as there is at present, the divorce between the brain-working minority and the manual majority. Up to the age of 18, all boys and girls would be members of the same college. Only their formal education would be conducted in separate compartments; all the outside activities, which are so important at this age, would be shared with each other; and boys and girls who were preparing themselves for very different activities in the adult community would be kept together until the last possible moment.

In other words, variety of education of the right kind and in the right place. Yet that is *not* the kind of variety which exists in our system at the moment. On the contrary, the muddled variety which we have at the moment is a definite obstacle to any of these suggested reforms. It is very largely an *administrative* variety in which the educational



system is tangled up like a puppy caught in a ball of string. This administrative variety has, indeed, first to be slashed through before anything can be done. Officials examining these proposals with their official minds would put their finger on a hundred points where administrative difficulties seemed to them insuperable. And since these administrative difficulties exist, they must be considered. One example may be given :

The Hadow Report, which the Board of Education was putting into practice until the war put an end to all educational advance, was presented in 1927. It raised the school age from 14 to 15, with 16 as an ambitious ultimate aim. It accepted the principle that every child should receive a general education up to that age and recommended that, for the 11's to 15's who did not go to Secondary Schools, separate schools should be established, to be called Senior Schools. But first these Senior Schools had to be built—so the raising of the age to 15 was postponed for four years. It was postponed again during the crisis year of 1931. Taken up again in 1936, it was decided that 1939 should be the year for the raising of the school age and the work of building and reorganising Senior Schools for the purpose was put in hand. The war postponed the raising of the age once again.

But, meanwhile, a second committee had presented a new report which in several important ways made the Hadow Report obsolete. The Spens Report surveyed Secondary education as a whole. It recognised as inevitable the eventual raising of the school age up to 16, and recommended that the whole of the nation's children should receive a Secondary education, less academic than the term implied before ; and it recommended that *the whole of this Secondary education should be administered under one code*. This contradicted the earlier report which had suggested that the Senior Schools should be still administered under the Elementary Code.

This may seem to the layman to be an academic point of administrative procedure, typical of bureaucratic web-spinning. But it is not entirely so. For the Hadow reorganisation scheme, though a great advance, perpetuated an evil which vitiates much of English education. The Senior School which it proposed to set up was under the Elementary Code—merely a continuation of the Elementary system and inferior therefore in status to any school coming under the Secondary Code. That inferiority of status—an evil in itself—was to be reflected in the financial treatment which these schools received. The scale of grants and payments

to schools under the Elementary Code is very considerably lower than that to schools under the Secondary Code. This shows itself in inferior buildings, less highly trained teachers, a smaller supply of equipment and larger classes.

If, therefore, after the war, the Board of Education were to go on with its present plans, instead of supplying the Secondary Schools for all which the latest report suggests, it would supply only a not very superior kind of Elementary Schools.

The layman is right to regard the whole thing as a piece of bureaucratic web-spinning. Why, indeed, should less money be spent on the education of children of 10, who are just as hard to teach, as on children of 16? Why should children of 10 have worse buildings than children of 16? Why, in fact, should there be this anomalous distinction between Elementary and Secondary Codes? The answer is improvisation, muddle instead of planning. And the time has come when the muddle wants putting straight.

Two important official reports have already recommended a general education up to the age of 16 for all children. And there is no longer any need to divide the children up by classes, income-levels, status or even code. The only sensible division is by age groups and the only outright division

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necessary that between the junior children from 5 to 11 and the senior boys and girls from 11 to 15½. The other distinctions are false or they are relics, relics of improvisations perhaps necessary at the time, but grown out of date, yet still existing as the innumerable papers of a bureaucracy exist because no one has bothered to tear them up.

Once this bureaucratic administrative variety were cut away, a national system emerges which is simple and various, by simply following the lines which our present educational policy has proposed but does not pursue. It might have the following four divisions :

- |     |         |                 |
|-----|---------|-----------------|
| (1) | 2-5     | Nursery School. |
| (2) | 5-11½   | Junior School.  |
| (3) | 11½-15½ | Senior School.  |
| (4) | 15½-18½ | College.        |

### (1) *Nursery School—Age 2-5.*

The only obvious fault with the present number of Nursery Schools is that there are too few of them. Unhampered by any tradition from the past, they have evolved an excellent modern tradition of their own. Nursery Schools are not only educationally desirable but socially necessary, and their number should be increased without delay. But they are expensive to build and equip ;

a modified form of them, a nursery class established as an adjunct to an ordinary Infant Welfare Centre, has proved a useful compromise ; and the evacuation scheme has produced another experiment, Nursery Centres, which are a modification of the same thing. The results obtained there should be worth watching. In any case some form of universal Nursery School should certainly be a part of the national system. Educationally, early training in the habits of social behaviour and hygiene is a great advantage. In a Nursery School they can be acquired under skilled guidance and in conditions which not every home can give. Besides, many working-class mothers must either go to work themselves or are too busy to pay sufficient attention to their children.

There is another piece of administrative " variety " to be cut away here. At present our Nursery Schools are administered jointly by the Ministry of Health and the Board of Education. The result of this is unnecessary delays and wastage. There is a strong case for a joint Ministry of National Welfare of which Education would be one department and Health another. But failing that, all education should come under one Government Department.

(2) *The Junior School—Age 5-11½.*

Here we have the best Elementary Schools as our model, and the education would be *general* in the fundamental sense in which we have defined it. Necessary and immediate reforms in the present Elementary Schools will be :

(1) Smaller classes. The present average is 40, and 50 is not uncommon and 60 occurs. These figures, with the overworked and harassed teachers they imply, are shameful. Thirty is the absolute maximum for a class ; beyond that, no teacher can at the same time control and pay individual attention to the children. Even 30 is really too large a number, but there should certainly be no larger class.

(2) Bad buildings. Here the bombs may have done some good. But in any case, let us state clearly that crowded classrooms, dark and dirty rooms and squalid playgrounds are no places for any British children of to-morrow to be educated in. Again, a piece of administrative " variety " is partly responsible for the evil. At present, the various religious denominations supply the buildings of Elementary Schools (but nothing else) in return for certain denominational teaching rights. But the religious bodies are often not able to afford improve-



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ments in their buildings. Administratively, this question of schools "provided" by religious denominations had already reached a crisis before the war. After the war, neither the Churches nor anyone else must be allowed to stand in the way of providing the best schools which can be built.

The Junior School as a part of the national system provides no real difficulties since it already exists. The only practical problem will be in getting rid of the numerous still existing Private Schools. They fall into two main groups. The first, the real "private schools," are purely commercial undertakings, descended from the old Dames' schools, mostly in suburban areas, and playing on the snobbery of lower middle-class parents who want something "better", i.e. socially superior to the State School. Most of these schools are in every way undesirable and far worse than the State Schools. They are understaffed by wretched underpaid assistant teachers, often only forced into such jobs by unemployment, and their educational standards are deplorably low. They will be no loss to the community whatsoever.

The other group, the so-called Preparatory Schools ("Prep. Schools"), are rather different. Many are well run, the boys are comfortable and happy, the standard of education quite high. But none the less

they are not necessary. They continue to exist only because the Public Schools expect their pupils to have come from Preparatory Schools, and make doubly sure by demanding Latin, which is not taught in State Elementary Schools, as an entrance subject ; and further, the Public Schools take in their pupils at the age of 13, where the State Secondary Schools take in theirs at 11.

Three simple measures would go a long way towards eliminating the Private School for boys and girls below 13, even as things stand. First, compulsory inspection of all Private Schools with Government power to close those that were inefficient. That would get rid of most of the ordinary " Private Schools " and a proportion of the Preparatory Schools. Secondly, the abolition of Latin as a set subject for Public School entrance, substituting a compulsory syllabus bringing the examination within the range of the Elementary Schools. Thirdly, compelling the Public Schools to follow the practice of the State Schools and start Secondary education at the age of 11. This question of diverse entrance ages has got to be tackled first, whatever solution is found for the Public School question.

Many parents, even among those who would still support the Public Schools, would now be delighted to have at least the

burden of the Preparatory School taken off their shoulders ; for the Preparatory School, like the Public School, costs anything from £100-£300 a year per boy or girl. Many already feel that the Preparatory School is only a relic which survives through snobbery and organisational difficulties. And while there is going to be strong opposition to any tampering with the Public Schools proper, the Preparatory Schools, which anyhow apply Public School methods to the wrong age, would fairly easily die an economic death, given the chance.

A universal State system of Junior Schools for children of all classes from the age of 5 to 11, would be an excellent beginning to the reuniting of the nation. It might, too, have a stimulating influence on the conduct of the present Elementary School. Considering the disadvantages under which it works, the present Elementary School system is a remarkable system. But a national system should not have to make allowances for itself. Middle-class parents, who had themselves been at Preparatory Schools where the largest class had been some 10 to 15 children, would be brought up against the fact that the average size of an Elementary School class is 40. They might even find their children members of a class of 60. After their own Preparatory School experience of

pleasant seaside surroundings in comfortable houses, they might be dismayed to discover that their own children, like others, were housed in buildings which had long been black-listed as unsuitable, but which were still in use. They would know how comparatively little it would cost to equip the schools adequately, instead of always having to "make do". In short, no longer having any need to make the old middle-class complaint that they paid not only for their own children's education, but for everyone else's, middle-class parents could use their influence to make sure that the national junior system was as good as material advantages could make it.

(3) *The Senior School—Age 11½–15½.*

The common background of a universal system of Junior Schools up to the age of 11 would be a great step forward—how valuable and good it can be, many Scotsmen know better than the English. More difficult to accomplish from the practical point of view, but equally important, would be the next stage of establishing a similar national system of schools for the age of from 11 to 15. More difficult to accomplish because it presupposes, in effect, the abolition of the Public Schools in their present form. The

opposition to that (on all the wrong grounds) will be considerable.

Yet what national education implies is not the total abolition of the Public School system, but the abolition of the class system which the Public Schools represent. Instead, all the elements which are so valuable in the Public School training should be given universally to all children at this age. The difficulties are mainly financial, but they could be quite easily overcome if the wish to overcome them were there.

For we shall start after the war with a great many advantages. A great many town school buildings will be lying in ruins, so that new ones will in any case have to be built somewhere. Then again, a quite large number of the smaller Public Schools (including the girls' schools and large Private Schools) will have been driven out of the market. Their buildings and equipment will be up for sale. The same will be true of a large number of country houses, which, as has been shown, make into admirable schools (cf. Bryanston and Canford). Finally, we shall have a great number of rural hutments and surplus barracks in which troops have been stationed during the war.

All these building resources could be used as the foundation of a universal system of community boarding schools for all children

of this age group on the analogy of the successful camp schools. (Whether it would be desirable for the children to spend all their school time away from home at such boarding schools is a matter for consideration. Perhaps it would be better if they spent only half their time away.) Among the building resources at its disposal, any local educational authority should be able to acquire the material for this purpose. Thus all the nation's children would have at least some experience of the advantages of the community life of a boarding school. The conditions would certainly be rudimentary, but it is a mistake, a bureaucratic mistake, to suppose that it is necessary to have highly finished buildings for schools, especially at this age. Indeed, the best kind of education the children could receive at this age would be in constructing, furnishing and finishing the skeletons of schools with which they might first be faced. This construction work could be a far better basis for the community life than the organised games of the Public Schools or the organised back-to-nature cult of a Youth movement.

Such a scheme of universal State boarding schools would require courage, determination and wide powers for local authorities. But if the advantages of the Public School



system is as important as its defenders claim, it is important enough to have this amount of courage and determination and money spent on giving them to the whole nation. And since the new education would be applied to the whole nation, it would be a more permanent and surer method of healing the class division than such bastard educational devices as Youth movements.

(4) *Local Colleges*—Age  $15\frac{1}{2}$ — $18\frac{1}{2}$ .

Assuming—and it is a large assumption—the freezing out of the present Public Schools—a model of the new colleges for this age group could be found in the village colleges which Mr. Henry Morris, the Director of Education, has established in Cambridgeshire. There he has provided four colleges to act as educational centres for the district, co-ordinating at the same time the Senior Schools, continued adult education, and the cultural activities of each district. The Local Colleges here proposed, however, would co-ordinate, instead, the continued education of all adolescents apprenticed to work at 16, and those who were staying on full time at school for specialised study. As well, they would be the centres for all local cultural activity, thus holding together to the last possible moment a whole young generation of boys

and girls who in after life would follow different paths.

Where, however, it may be asked, are the countless buildings for these new colleges to come from in war-scarred England? Would they not be too expensive to build and to equip? Well, by the time this war is over, it is pretty certain that there are going to be a great many existing schools to replace; the bombs have done that for us at least. But there already exists the nucleus of sites and buildings for these colleges in the Public Schools themselves and the larger Secondary Schools. The general run of Public Schools, although old-fashioned in many of their boarding arrangements, are for the most part excellently equipped with laboratories, libraries, playing-fields, swimming-baths and concert halls. That is an excellent foundation. Unless things go very wrong indeed, the majority of these after the war will find themselves unable to carry on without the support of public money. They can be turned back to their original purposes, for most of them originally were *public* schools founded for the purpose of giving an education to the "poor and needy". Let them become *public* again.

Besides the boys' Public Schools there are also many big girls' schools. All these

would not be enough to supply the whole number of Local Colleges needed. But there would be a large enough supply of premises to form the nucleus. Besides, as Public Schools, these schools were wholly boarding schools ; the colleges would not be. Public School buildings now in use as boarding houses could be adapted for the different purposes of the new college and a Public School now suitable for 300 pupils would, as a college, be able to serve double that number. It is true that many of these schools are not in large towns ; in fact, very few of them are. But many are near enough to be reached from the nearest big town by bus. Thus Wellington College is only twenty minutes from Reading by bus. Marlborough College is only half an hour from Swindon. A survey of such resources, remembering that the girls' boarding schools would be just as useful, and that the present Secondary Schools could be drawn on wherever suitably equipped, would show that there is a large nucleus on which the Local College could be founded.

But it is idle to pretend that such a scheme of Local Colleges, although it has already received sympathetic attention, will, in practice, be easy to put over. Given the good will, it would of course be comparatively simple, especially as by the time the war is

over there will have to be a great deal of rebuilding. But it is precisely the good will that will be lacking in the minds of many people. The Public Schools are not going to give up their present position of privilege without making a fight for it. Nearly all are faced at the moment with financial crisis ; they will have to modify their attitude towards the State to a certain extent. But they will naturally not modify it so completely as this if they can possibly avoid it. And it is for this reason that Public School Conferences are at present preferring the idea of accepting the principle of infiltration from the Elementary Schools in return for a grant from the public Exchequer. They hope to be able to control the total numbers of this infiltration, so that it can have little if any effect on the fundamental character of the Schools concerned.

Equally, there will be opposition from the Secondary Schools. Many of these, aping the Public Schools, are proud of their tradition and their "Honours Board" recording the scholarships and honours which "the School" has won. But in rural districts, at least, the problem of the "sixth form" has become an acute one ; at many Secondary Schools there are not enough pupils staying on after 16 to make adequate sixth-form arrangements possible ;

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and it has already been suggested that the sixth forms of several Secondary Schools should combine. This is the beginning of the Local College.

The Local College, then, is the apex of any national system. The age group for which it provides ( $15\frac{1}{2}$ -18) has been disgracefully neglected by the present system, more than 70 per cent. of children in it receiving at the moment *no education at all*. This is all the more lamentable because it is only at this age that you can expect children to begin taking an intelligent interest in their world. Before that they are only capable of learning the rudimentary techniques. It is not too much to say that the future success of our democratic way of life depends on providing a proper education (in the widest sense) to this neglected age group.

The realisation of this may seem at the moment a long way off. A national system may sound wildly impracticable and idealistic. Yet it is not so far away. Four quite easy first-stage measures, for instance, would go a long way towards clearing the ground. And we should certainly make them our first objectives. They are :

- (1) The abolition of private education below the age of 11.

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(2) Uniformity of age entrance between the Public Schools and State Secondary Schools.

(3) The raising of the school age to 16.

(4) Continued day-time education up to the age of 18.

These reforms would not yet give us the truly National system ; but they are essential steps in that direction, and they would open the gates. Later steps would seem much less complicated and impracticable once these were taken.



## CHAPTER VIII

### *SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS*

NOTHING is easier than to construct an educational system—on paper. To get it working is another matter, even when, as in the outline suggested in this book, it follows the lines along which official educational theory is already moving. But an educational system does not exist in a vacuum; it is only a part of the larger society which it serves. However progressive, earnest or enthusiastic the body of educationists and teachers may be, they can only advance a yard or two at most in front of the whole society. Education is an expensive business, and educationists always have to persuade non-educationists, the great bulk of politicians, tax-payers and the general public, of the value of any experiments or changes they wish to make. Only private schools with sufficiently large endowments have so far been free from this need.

It is largely in certain few Private Schools that much of the useful experiment of the

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last two decades has been carried out ; and these Private Schools are good argument against the nationalisation of all education. Yet just because they are exempt from satisfying ordinary people of the value of their experiments, a great deal of what they do is quite out of touch with modern life as it is. They educate children for the world of their dreams ; but their pupils have to enter a world of very different realities. Besides, even as things are, there has been a great deal of useful experiment in State Schools in the last two decades. A national system must and can certainly be flexible enough to encourage its innovators.

But this condition of education—that it can only be what society at large allows it to be—must always limit the hopes which are too often placed on education as a potential saviour of our troubled world. Certainly a system of education which for some 80 per cent. of the population stops at the age of 14 or even 15 will not save us. It is a fallacy to think that anything else much matters until this defect is changed, and with it the other heavy handicaps to which the Treasury condemns the English educational system. Properly trained teachers, reasonably small classes, adequate buildings, continued educational control of adolescent youths and girls up to the age of 18—these things are im-

mediate necessities without which, no matter what society is like, our educational system can hope to do nothing but turn out a semi-literate mass, the easiest target for the advertisement writer, or his political counterpart, the modern totalitarian demagogue.

But it is no less a fallacy to suppose, as some reformers apparently do, that the raising of the school age *by itself* can be enough to work a fundamental change. Because we must first decide, and decide pretty quickly, what sort of society we are aiming at and educate *for that*. We have seen, by now, that education is an instrument which can turn out to order standard Nazis or Democrats, Public School men or Marxists, not, it is true, cut to an exact pattern, but close enough for practical purposes.

For this reason, much current talk about the importance of the Public Schools for producing "leaders" is so much cant. No one, least of all among the spokesmen of the Public Schools, has troubled to think out what sort of leaders we shall want not merely in 1942, but in 1960. Nothing would be more disastrous than to increase the preponderating influence of the Public Schools still further and go on turning out masses of "leaders" of the out-of-date pattern who have landed us where we are. There

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are easier and cheaper ways of destroying ourselves.

A preamble on the individual and social qualities which a Democracy wants to bring out in its leaders should preface the recommendation which a Royal Commission on Education ought to make. For there is no doubt that this is the time for appointing a Royal Commission to think out the problems of British education for after the war. It would be fatal to listen to those who urge that the only important thing is to win the war and leave all questions of reconstruction till then. There will be plenty of physical reconstruction to be put in hand when the war is over, but there must be a plan on which to begin. It is useless to rebuild bombed schools until we have decided on the future shape of the whole educational system.

Now is the time for people to be thinking about the future of British education. What have been put forward in this book are only outline suggestions. There may be other ways of achieving the essential reforms, more practical ways of carrying them out. A Royal Commission would ventilate them and weigh them, and would be the only body powerful enough to deal with the Public School question. For the Governors, the Old Boys, the Old Guard generally, will

not allow the Public Schools in their present form to fade out without making a fight. Should they be successful, it will seriously prejudice the whole of Secondary education in this country. If the Public School system has anything to offer to the nation, as I think it has for a certain age group, let its contribution be assessed and offered to the whole nation. In school camps of one kind and another for adolescents this could be done. But the fashionable solution of draining off a few selected boys from the Secondary Schools and putting them into the present Public Schools is *not* a way of offering Public School advantages to the whole nation. On the contrary, it would preserve the present disastrous segregation of one group of the nation's youth in its formative years, and undermine such useful work as the present State Secondary Schools are trying to do, by taking their best pupils from them. This is indeed killing two birds with one stone.

A far more radical solution of the problem is needed. The lines along which that solution can be found are matters of fairly common agreement among educationists. The Royal Commission would find, when it came to take evidence, quite a large basis of agreement. For instance, that schooling has been interpreted in too narrow a sense

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—that education, which should be far wider, has been confused with book-learning. This especially between the ages of 11 and 15. Continued educational control of adolescents up to the age of 18 *in working hours* (i.e. a new apprenticeship) is recognised as an essential step after the war, and it is equally recognised that that control must be loose, “unschooly” and imaginative, must cater for a majority who are not “intellectual specialists” and consequently neglected by the present narrow interpretation of education. It is by now also generally recognised that the evils which flow from our rigidly class- and money-bound education spread wide and far over our national life, resulting in a gross waste of talent and frustrating the growth of a true democratic way of life in Britain.

The problem for the Royal Commission would not be to discover total agreement on what was wanted, but to translate a strong general desire for reform into concrete terms. It would need courage to cut through the heritage of a dead past, and imagination to see that many problems can be quite easily solved. I should like to think that the first step the members of the Commission would take would be to drive to Cambridgeshire, to the village of Impington, and there to visit the magnificent Village College which



Gropius has designed. There they would see an example of what courage and imagination are able (with what difficulty in England!) to achieve. A building which is itself alive, a building of our time, dignified, plain and eminently suited to its purpose. And that purpose is not a "school" in the sense in which generations of the English think of school—dirty, chalk-dusted classrooms, dim lightless corridors, chocolate or "varnish" paint and a general air of unwilling teachers cramming even more unwilling vessels with a sour vinegar of knowledge. Rather a building with the airy spaciousness which can attract and invite adults as well as children, a dignified building which can make learning, too, dignified, a university to which people will want to come because it is a pleasure to be in such beautiful surroundings, and because this Village College is equipped to satisfy what are after all human needs, as fundamental as our daily bread—the desire to build and to construct, to grow things and to learn things, to sing or dance or act or read or even to play games.

Refreshed by the journey, the Commission might return to its labours in a fit spirit to match the wide opportunities which the future offers with the width of its own imagination; and to resist the invitations

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which it would receive from many sides to Return to the Old Ways. For we shall hear plenty of that ; the Good Old Ways, The Old Traditions, are going to find their vociferous defenders—there will be one or two on the Commission itself. But of course we cannot go backwards. Marshal Pétain and the Vichy Outlook should be a sufficient warning to those who raise the cry of Back to the Old Ways ! For Marshal Pétain's attempt to revive the dead past of France has only meant the private bodyguards, the double axes, the nationalist Youth movement, the raised arm salute, all the paraphernalia of the modern dictator.

History is a process of moving forward. Translated into educational terms, this means that we must provide for every child in this country the chance of developing its talents and satisfying its urge to construct, that we must teach all our children in common our common way of living and show them that the knowledge which can build a decent world is there if they choose to use it. For this purpose we do not have to rely only on the past, on the houses of learning whose traditions are as ancient and dignified as those of Winchester and Eton, though these traditions have their contribution to make. We have examples of our own time if we care to look for them : the

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Nursery School at one end of the national system, the Village College at the other—their only defect is that there are so lamentably few of each. But they show the way in which through education we could help to win the future. All we need is the courage and the imagination to do so.

THE END

